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The Racialized Politics of Home in Slavery and Freedom

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ABSTRACT

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While most historians interpret the motivations of the black freedom struggle—including the acquisition of legal freedom and citizenship—as public and traditionally political issues, this project places black homes at the center of the narrative. Scholars often overlook how the rights of home—including privacy, freedom of movement, and the security of self and family in one's dwelling—suffused the private and public politics of nineteenth-century Americans. Black women and men sought solutions to violent social injustices by drawing on a long tradition of resistance and activism that began before the opening of ballot boxes, government offices, and citizenship. They sought freedom and rights through the home.

This dissertation uses a wide range of material, visual, and textual sources to demonstrate how enslaved and free black Americans gave meaning to their lives, shaped their hopes, and sought individual and social change through their dwelling space, structure, and objects. Home was a concept, space, and structure that shaped the meaning and experience of slavery and liberty. Throughout the long nineteenth century, the black home functioned simultaneously as a symbol that could destroy or invigorate the racist social structure that undergirded slavery. In physical dwellings throughout the American

South, black men and women fought to build privacy and security into their dwellings and lives, even as white southerners racialized these rights for white families only. Looking across the chasm of war and emancipation uncovers the crucial role of home to evolving notions of freedom in the tumultuous long nineteenth century. Revealing the connections between race, home, and liberty, this project reorients the narrative of the black freedom struggle towards the domestic spaces and objects that shaped the politics of nineteenth-century Americans.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1895 Margaret Murray Washington presented an affecting scene to readers of the Christian periodical *Lend a Hand*: "Look for a moment into a log cabin in Alabama. There is only one room, 12x10… In this hut live the father and mother, and in here their eight or ten children are born and reared and die." A material remnant of slavery, the southern one-room cabin was at the center of the problem of and solution to Jim Crow America. By focusing their efforts on homes like that Alabama cabin, black activists believed that there would "be fewer thrusts at the immorality of the race [and thus] there will be less lynchings of negro men and women."[1] W. E. B. Du Bois also argued that the problems afflicting black Americans were directly connected to their homes. "[T]he problem of the Negro's house," Du Bois maintained in a 1901 *Southern Workman* article, "assumes considerable importance from its bearing on the other Negro problems."[2] Debates about equality, freedom, and rights transpiring in courtrooms and churches, through electoral politics and citizenship claims, related directly to black homes.

This dissertation uses a wide range of material, visual, and textual sources to demonstrate how black homes were central to the nineteenth-century black freedom struggle. Home was a concept, space, and structure that shaped the meaning and experience of slavery and liberty. Throughout the long nineteenth century, the black home functioned as a symbol that could simultaneously destroy or invigorate the racist social structure that undergirded slavery. In physical dwellings throughout the American

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[1] Margaret Murray Washington, "The New Negro Woman," *Lend a Hand* 15, no. 4 (October 1, 1895): 257, 260.
[2] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; I. The Elements of the Problem," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 7 (July 1901): 391.

South, black men and women fought to transform these confining spaces into homes, even as white southerners violently denied them what in this project are termed the rights of home. These rights were not yet codified or explicitly defined—they were emergent in the nineteenth century—but were understood as crucial elements of freedom. Black southerners worked to build privacy and security into their dwellings and lives, even as white southerners racialized these for white families only. Across the chasm of war and emancipation, home remained crucial to evolving notions of freedom. Revealing the connections between race, home, and liberty in the nineteenth century, this project reorients the narrative of the black freedom struggle towards the private spaces and objects that shaped the ideologies and actions of Americans enslaved and free, black and white.

While most historians interpret the contests for freedom—including the acquisition of legal freedom, citizenship, and rights for black Americans—as public and traditionally political battles, this project places the so-called private sphere of the home at the center of nineteenth-century debates over slavery and freedom. Sweeping narratives of the campaign for equality and liberty, from Steven Hahn to Stephen Kantrowitz, focus almost exclusively on public, mostly male, words and actions.[3] Even the valuable scholarship of historians such as Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Glenda Gilmore, and Martha S. Jones, which has revealed the pivotal role of women in the debates over slavery and freedom, has most often looked to the public sphere.[4]

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[3] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Stephen Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829–1889* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012).

[4] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender & Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920* (Chapel

Examining the quest for greater freedom and rights only within the public sphere disregards the interconnectedness of the public and private. Indeed, as W. E. B. Du Bois made so clear, understanding the public and political requires grappling with black homes. The rights of home—including privacy, freedom of movement, and the security of self and family in one's dwelling—suffused debates in the nineteenth-century public sphere. On the flip side, the public politics of slavery and freedom shaped the politics, objects, and spaces of the so-called private sphere. This project seeks to complicate the distinctions of public and private that obscure the political agency of women and the domestic priorities of men. Even as historians have long recognized that the private sphere has public implications and vice versa, still our conversations regarding how Americans conceived of their freedom remain rooted in public activities. And yet the meanings of home and privacy were important not only within the confines of one's dwelling; they had major implications for the ways white southerners defended and perpetuated slavery, and the ways black southerners defined freedom.

Building on the work of Stephanie Camp, Thavolia Glymph, and others who take seriously the role of slave dwellings as sites of resistance, my work demonstrates how enslaved and free black Americans gave meaning to their lives, shaped their hopes, argued for freedom, and sought individual and social change through their dwelling spaces, structures, and objects.[5] The most important debates of the nineteenth century did not simply halt at the front door; they took place in and found meaning through the

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Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Martha S. Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[5] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

dwellings of black and white Americans. More than twenty years ago, Stephanie McCurry demonstrated that in antebellum southern society, influence and power, indeed a man's position as a citizen deserving of rights, flowed from one's mastery over dependents and domestic spaces.[6] But this connection was not limited to white men; black women and men believed freedom, citizenship, and rights were rooted in the home. Black Americans would continue to connect their freedom with the home after the legal end of slavery. As the *Tribune*, a black New Orleans newspaper, argued in 1869, "without homes, without any right in the soil, what freedom our people have, must be gradually reduced."[7] This project intentionally bridges the too-often divided long nineteenth century to examine how both the fight for freedom and struggle to maintain oppression through the home continued and changed after the disruptions of war and emancipation. Black women and men sought solutions to the violent injustices of Jim Crow America by drawing on a long tradition of resistance, politics, and activism that went back before ballot boxes, government offices, and citizenship were open to all. They sought freedom through the home.

Dwellings, domestic spaces, and the private sphere: these ideas and their physical manifestations were central to the debate and violent contest over who could claim freedom and citizenship. For many black Americans, freedom meant the ability to maintain families in private spaces away from the intrusion and violation of white men and women. And while their homes served as sites of resistance and activism, they simultaneously provided vehicles for enacting white supremacist ideologies. Indeed,

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[6] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[7] Quote from Charles F. Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule: The Freedman's Bureau and Black Land Ownership* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 134.

white southerners inscribed race into the meaning and materiality of home to limit the rights of black southerners. Scholars have long recognized how the American home was gendered, but this project demonstrates how American homes were also racialized. The shifting but potent racialized ideology of home had lasting effects on how white southerners justified regimes of enslavement, surveillance, intrusion, and violence against black homes and families. Incorporating the black home transforms our narratives of slavery, white supremacy, racial violence, and the diverse tactics black Americans adopted to combat unjust systems.

Home is difficult to trace; it is historically contingent, culturally and locally inflected, and personally defined. In other words, home—as an idea and structure—changes over time and across space, depends on one's cultural associations, on the distinctions of one's locality, and the experiences and preferences of an individual. It is, in part, defined by the household (whether the "family" or not) that inhabits it, that labors in it, that consumes in it.[8] Add to this complexity the extreme diversity of living conditions for enslaved and free black southerners in the nineteenth century. There was

[8] Scholars have spent much room discussing the differences between home/house and household. Overwhelmingly, this project is more concerned with the idea, space, structure, and objects of home, though of course the household (the unit of production and/or consumption) plays a role in these. There does not seem as stark a conceptual difference between home and household for those in the nineteenth century as scholars make in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Still, it should be noted that this dissertation focuses less on what scholars regard as household structure and more on the physical structure of home itself, along with the meaning and objects of the home. There are many scholars to note for work on the household, but the short list must include Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Ann Patton Malone, *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*; Eugene Genovese, "'Our Family, White and Black': Family and Household in the Southern Slaveholders' World View," in *In Joy and Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830–1900*, ed. Carol Blesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 69–87; Peter W. Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); *Household Chores and Household Choices: Theorizing the Domestic Sphere in Historical Archaeology*, eds. Kerri Saige Barile and Jamie C. Brandon (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

no one conception or physical manifestation of black homes; there was no "*the* black home." Yet there were widely held beliefs relating to home, common experiences of dwellings, and frequent uses of the black home as a trope.

For enslaved individuals, home was not only a structure; it was also the yard, garden, quarter, plantation, and streets. Scholars have revealed the significance of these home spaces beyond the dwelling to enslaved people's lives. Yet the dwelling, or living and sleeping space—whether a one-room log cabin, a double-pen shed, a two-story house, or a small room off the master's bedroom—was decidedly meaningful. This dissertation, then, focuses mainly on slave dwellings when discussing slave homes, while also recognizing the interconnected nature of these indoor spaces with outdoors ones. Additionally, this project looks most often at evidence of medium- to large-size plantations in the rural South. And while local differences of slavery in Maryland versus Georgia versus Texas, of established regions versus frontier, certainly matter, the evidence thus far extracted reveals similarities that extend across the vast and varied South.

This focus on finding the commonalities continues into analyses of the postbellum period. As for enslaved individuals, home in freedom also meant much more than just the dwelling. Historian Earl Lewis describes how postbellum black Americans conceived of "home spheres" as shared institutions—the church, the school, the communal spaces—surrounded by black homes.[9] But in the postbellum period, property and land ownership become even more intertwined with conceptions of home. Distinctions between landowning and non-landowning, of tenant farmers and sharecroppers, are recognized,

[9] Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 5.

yet the motivation is rather to discern how freed people in the postbellum South shared a reliance on home to establish freedom, prosperity, and even citizenship. Property ownership and land acquisition, common themes for historians of the postbellum South, are here explored in their relation to the significance and use of home for freed people.

This project hinges on the recognition that home functions simultaneously on conceptual, spatial, and material planes. The conceptual nature of home emerges from debates within a culture about what home is; in other words, what ideas and ideals it embodies, what image forms it takes, and what it reveals about the inhabitants, community, or larger society. The spatial component of home includes the landscape within which it is situated, which in this project most often is the rural, southern, plantation landscape. The materiality of home comprises the dwelling itself, the objects within it, and the land upon which it sits. Indeed, the material world is crucial to understanding how and why the home was central to nineteenth-century politics.

While traditional archival and printed sources are essential, so too are the material and visual remains, particularly as the majority of black Americans were denied the opportunity to read and write during the nineteenth century. The material world—objects and structures especially—both create and reflect social ideas and ideals, therefore providing an important corrective to the unbalanced written record. Combining a material culture approach with the work of historical archaeologists and architectural historians provides a wide array of physical items through which to explore the past. Historical archaeologists and vernacular architectural historians such as John Michael Vlach, Dell Upton, Theresa A. Singleton, Terrence Epperson, J. W. Joseph, and Whitney Battle-Baptiste have provided essential windows into slavery, race, and power through

published articles and fieldwork.[10] Their work shows that we must investigate material remains if we wish to continue uncovering the lives of those who left few written records behind. Still, the remnants of objects and buildings must be contextualized with the writings of those who made, purchased, and used them. And yet archaeologists of African America have been hesitant to utilize textual sources that emerged from the viewpoint of black Americans. Narratives, memoirs, and interviews of former slaves, for example, are famously difficult to use and require recognition of the strains under which they were written or taken. Still, they help uncover and confirm many details of how black individuals lived within the landscape of slavery and freedom.[11] Historians need the work of archaeologists to uncover the silences of the archive, and archaeologists likewise need the contextualizing aid of historians to help make meaning of past material worlds. The materiality of home underlies the analysis and arguments here. When artifacts like a slave lock and slave cabin are paired with additional sources like archaeological reports, architectural drawings, planters' papers, black newspapers, legal documents, novels and memoirs, it becomes clear that home—as an idea, space, and structure, and objects within that structure people call home—was central to the nineteenth-century black freedom struggle.

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[10] Major works include John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Theresa A. Singleton, *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life* (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, Inc., 1985); Terrence Epperson, "Constructing Difference: The Social and Spatial Order of the Chesapeake Plantation," in *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999); J. W. Joseph, "White Columns and Black Hands: Class and Classification in the Plantation Ideology of the Georgia and South Carolina Lowcountry," *Historical Archaeology* 27, no. 3 (1993): 57–75; Whitney Battle-Baptiste, *Black Feminist Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2011).

[11] Whitney Battle-Baptiste notes the relative absence of oral histories and African American literature within studies of the archaeology of slavery. Whitney L. Battle-Baptiste, "'In This Here Place': Interpreting Enslaved Homeplaces," in *Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora*, eds. Akinwumi Ogundiran and Toyin Falola (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 248.

This project argues that throughout the nineteenth century, Americans developed a set of rights related to home. It is important here to emphasize that these rights were not yet codified and were infrequently explicitly mentioned as "rights," but during the period here studied were developing as such. What are referred to as the "rights of home" in this project included the right to privacy, to freedom of movement, and to security of self and family within whatever space was deemed home. All of these rights developed out of conversations about property, the quartering of troops, masculinity, and racial fears. These rights of home were rooted in English common law, the US Constitution, and cultural belief systems (which by the 1830s at least outwardly declared the ascension of democracy and the common man). Every man's home was his castle, the legal and cultural tenet went, and no unwanted individual or organization was to surveil, intrude, or enact violence against it. As legal scholars such as Margaret Jane Radin and Daniel J. Sharfstein have shown, early Americans believed the home was an inviolable place; as the "moral nexus between liberty, privacy, and freedom of association," it should never be violated.[12] It was Americans' right to keep their homes, and the families within them, safe, private, and free. Yet even the phrase "every man's home a castle" indicates the obvious deficiency of this rights system, since the category of "man" was not universal but limited in the nineteenth century. Slave owners and white supremacists recognized the power inherent in this limitation, and therefore sought to deny those rights to black southerners. In doing so, they racialized the concept of home and its attendant rights, promulgating the belief that only white Americans deserved the rights and privileges of

[12] Margarent Jane Radin, "Property and Personhood," *Stanford Law Review* 34 (1982); quote from Daniel J. Sharfstein, "Atrocity, Entitlement, and Personhood in Property," *Virginia Law Review* 98, no. 3 (May 2012): 635–90.

home. Throughout the nineteenth century, enslaved and free black Americans and white advocates argued (though not always explicitly) that the rights of home were human rights, thereby countering the racialized ideology that white supremacists crafted. These were nascent rights, ones not inscribed into law but rather emerging out of cultural and social contexts that greatly influenced the lives of black Americans.

This becomes particularly clear with the emergent right of privacy.[13] Today, Americans most associate the right of privacy with the body and with thoughts/communications. But before the second half of the twentieth century, privacy was very much associated with the home. The term privacy rarely appeared in the nineteenth century but the concept was being formulated in the decades before and after the Civil War. While debates endure as to whether the US Constitution provides a "right to privacy," for most of the nineteenth century there was no codified or explicit right to privacy for anyone.[14] From the colonial period through the antebellum era, most Americans experienced a limited privacy. Living on farms or in small towns, often in tightly knit communities with mutual interests, people were aware of each other's movements and doings. Small dwellings with extended family meant little space and time for one's self. Even for the well-to-do, live-in labor became increasingly popular across the United States in the eighteenth century, so that working-class servants and enslaved

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[13] The theory of an "emergent concept" comes from Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[14] Strict constructionists emphasize that those who framed the nation's founding documents never used the term "right to privacy" or even the word "privacy." This conservative approach does not take into account how the core meaning of privacy—to be let alone—has a long, complex history that predates, extends, and informs the legal understanding. Additionally, as Frederick Lane makes clear, although the federal government has never explicitly recognized the right to privacy through either constitutional amendment or statute, almost one-third of all US states have legally recognized a right to privacy. Frederick S. Lane, *American Privacy: The 400-Year History of Our Most Contested Right* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 60–61.

people were often, if not constantly, present. Still, a desire for personal, familial, and domestic privacy became increasingly prevalent throughout eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century America. This is clear in the codification of the "home is castle" belief in the 4th amendment to the US Constitution, which declares that persons, houses, and effects are free from unwarranted searches and seizures. The question remained as to whose rights were guaranteed by the Constitution and other legal documents. Although there was no legal declaration of a right to privacy, numerous court decisions and cultural beliefs merged in the nineteenth century to assert the pervasive acceptance of this unstated right. And that right, in the antebellum era, became racialized.[15] One of the lines separating slavery and freedom, and thus black and white, was that only the latter could claim and defend privacy. If privacy was applicable only to certain peoples, particularly those with white skin, it would allow for the surveillance of black individuals to a degree unknown in white America.[16] An ideal slavery, then, would be one that completely forbid the possibility of privacy for the enslaved. Yet enslaved people desired privacy, even if they could not claim and defend it, and so sought to create spaces of secrecy and concealment within their homes as a form of limited privacy and protection. And after emancipation, this desire for privacy would become a demand. In federal testimonies

[15] The first explicit inclusion of a privacy protection provision appeared in Washington state's Declaration of Rights, ratified in 1889 and still in use today. Section 7 of this first article declares that, "No person shall be disturbed in his private affairs, or his home invaded, without authority of the law." In fact, the title of this right is "The Invasion of Private Affairs or Home Prohibited." The origin date of the term "right to privacy" is often noted as December 1890, when future Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis and his colleague Samuel Warren, Jr., published "The Right to Privacy," *Harvard Law Review* V. IV, no. 5 (December 1890). For the argument that the right to privacy stems from this article, see, Dorothy J. Glancy, "The Invention of the Right to Privacy," *Arizona Law Review* 21, no. 1 (1979): 1–39. No legal definition of privacy was documented until the 1928 Supreme Court decision of *Olmstead v. United States*.

[16] Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

against the KKK in the 1860s and 1870s, for instance, freedmen declared their demand "to be let alone"—the phrase commonly used to define privacy.[17]

While the racialization of home was a national process, this project focuses on the development of this ideology and the challenges against it in southern states. The evidence for such a national project is plentiful; race riots and violence against free black homes was a common occurrence through the nineteenth-century US North. The Fugitive Slave Act seemed to collapse regional boundaries for black Americans, who felt their homes open to intrusion and surveillance regardless of whether they were in the South or North. Postbellum physical, economic, and social violence was substantial in northern as well as southern states. And certainly the most significant public proclamations for the uplift of southern black homes and the concomitant destruction of white supremacy came from northern publications. Yet the southern context is so integral to the larger narrative, and so complex, that it warrants focused investigation.[18]

This examination therefore begins in the early nineteenth-century South, where white men and women embedded a racialized ideology of home into the landscape and legal culture of the South (chapter 1). What is often missing from the conversation about the influence of race on the private lives of individuals is how black and white homes—

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[17] See "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' North Carolina, (p.1-32), 1871," 9–10, in Folder 9, Box 1, J. B. D. Cogswell Papers, American Antiquarian Society (AAS); "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' Mississippi, (p 193-281), 1871," 217, in Folder 13, Box 1, J. B. D. Cogswell Papers, AAS.

[18] Subregional and local distinctions ensured that no one area of the South represented the whole, just as the vast diversity of living conditions for enslaved and free ensured that no one single dwelling type was representative. But across the region and time span, connections appear. It should be noted that much of the material and textual evidence regarding slave cabins and landscape arrangement comes from established areas such as Virginia, Maryland, South and North Carolina, and Georgia. Especially in the early antebellum era, when Alabama, Mississippi, and other Deep South states were in formative, frontier periods, living arrangements for enslaved and enslaver could be downright haphazard. Yet a good deal of testimony comes from formerly enslaved people in "frontier" states like Texas, which reveal commonalities among the resistance techniques of the enslaved in their dwellings across the vast and diverse region of the US South.

the ideals and realities—shaped one another. Overwhelmingly, historians still privilege the written in a way that obscures how racial difference was ingrained in the very fabric of the southern landscape, a process that made real the underlying structure of racism and slavery in the United States.[19] What cultural geographer Steven Hoelscher calls the racialized "everyday geographies" of post-emancipation urban southern spaces are indeed rooted in antebellum private spaces.[20] Elite white southerners endeavored to maintain the often competing imperatives of privacy from and surveillance over their enslaved property. They therefore sought to fix white supremacy into their domestic situations. Elite planters in the South held their own rights and privileges of home dear, believing that they were central to the foundation of liberty. In a slave society that sought to deny any liberty to enslaved laborers, it was essential to deny these rights of home to black women and men, and they did so in part by imbuing white mastery and supremacy into the plantation landscape. To express and maintain their power, white southerners denied the rights of home to the enslaved through cultural, spatial, and violent mechanisms. In their private lives, elite slave holders arranged their plantations and constructed domestic buildings to demonstrate their mastery. These new arrangements also facilitated the violent mechanisms through which owners limited the privacy, protection, and safety of slave homes. White southerners continually relied on imprisonment, surveillance, and intrusion into slave dwellings, thereby reasserting that these homes were (unlike their

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[19] Some of the most comprehensive studies of slave holders, for example, detail palatial main houses but do not go further to ask how those houses and the larger landscape reinforced the slave system. For example, see William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 152–54.

[20] Steven Hoelscher, "Making Place, Making Race: Performances of Whiteness in the Jim Crow South," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 3 (September 2003): 657–686.

own homes) nonautonomous private spaces.[21] These spaces were private only for owners, who demanded the right to regulate who could enter and potentially damage their property. Constantly open to owners yet closed to others, including unauthorized white southerners, slave dwellings were part public, part private. Claiming their rights to home while denying those rights to the enslaved created a racialized understanding of home, one that affected the ways white southerners regarded and interacted with black homes.

The enslaved challenged this racialized ideology by constructing their own ideology of home that recognized the simultaneous limitations and possibilities of privacy and protection in slave homes (chapter 2). Enslaved individuals acknowledged that privacy and protection were impossible within their homes; legal and cultural understandings of slavery denied these men and women the right to privacy, and the violent mechanisms of control utilized by slaveholders ensured that. Yet women and men constructed literal and figurative spaces to establish aspects of life outside the purview of white individuals. Denied the right to privacy in their bodies and domestic areas, enslaved individuals used their dwellings to build secret and concealed spaces into their lives, allowing them a modicum of relief from the gaze and intrusion of white eyes into black spaces. While understanding (based on their experiences of surveillance, intrusion, and containment) that their homes were nonautonomous private spaces, enslaved individuals also believed they should have their own spaces that were not open to an owner. Sometimes those spaces were as small as a locked trunk or covered underground pit; others attempted to keep their entire dwellings private from prying eyes and hands.

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[21] The concept of a non-autonomous private space comes from Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 156–61, 201.

Enslaved women and men thus challenged the racialized conception of home by instilling secret, concealed, semi-private spaces into their dwellings, and thereby created a spectrum from secrecy to privacy that characterized their own ideology of home parallel to yet distinct from white southerners. These dual ideologies undergirded developing conceptions of the rights of home, and ultimately shaped antebellum understandings of freedom and slavery in the US South.

Americans, enslaved and free, regarded the slave home as central to their politics, particularly to the private and public debates over slavery and freedom. The slave home influenced the lived experience of slavery, just as it shaped anti- and pro-slavery ideology (chapter 3). Although slave dwellings were often uncomfortable, small, and less than ideal, enslaved women and men placed great meaning and hope in their homes. Yet if and how enslaved people understood their domestic structures as "home" rarely factor into the scholarly conversation.[22] This chapter proceeds from Stephanie Camp's insistence that scholars investigating life "in the quarters" should move beyond the dichotomous description of slave spaces as either public spaces of labor reproduction or private spaces of community formation and towards an investigation of the "passions with which enslaved people invested their homes, and the larger significance of those passions."[23] In other words, to explore how enslaved people invested significance in their homes. Yet home was a complicated idea; many felt dwellings were jail cells or livestock pens, not the loving spaces that many longed for and sought to secure in freedom. These words

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[22] Historical archaeologists, landscape historians, and architectural historians continue their important work of shedding light on the material conditions of enslavement, yet they leave the reader asking what these domestic spaces actually meant to those who inhabited them.

[23] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 94. While the labor of women and men within the home must, necessarily, be part of a story about exploring the meaning and materiality of home, it is not central to this story. For more on labor and the home, see Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

came from the formerly enslaved who wrote narratives in support of the abolitionist movement. Focusing on the terrible living conditions of the enslaved, anti-slavery writers found potent evidence to argue against the institution of slavery in the trope of the slave home. Pro-slavery writers likewise used the slave home trope, though for the conflicting purpose of proving the goodness of slavery. In novels and agricultural journals, pro-slavery writers pictured slave homes as comfortable and happy homes, and slave owners as concerned patriarchs always seeking to improve their "family's" living conditions. But the domestic novels of the era did not simply focus on the material conditions of slave homes; both pro- and anti-slavery writers used the slave home to discuss morality and the inherent nature of the enslaved. Like all homes—though to a much greater extent—slave homes fell short of the ideal Victorian home, in large part due to slave owners' violent mechanisms of control. But this did not make slave homes less important or less real. Indeed, enslaved individuals connected the conception and materiality of home with the possibilities of freedom, with the potential of finally establishing safe, secure, and private spaces filled with family.

With freedom came the opportunity to make good on the hopes and promises of home. In the decades following the end of slavery, as black Americans sought greater freedoms outside the home, they also sought to demonstrate and fulfill freedom in their homes (chapter 4). For recently freed and free-born black Americans, acquiring and maintaining homes and land realized liberty's promises. Northern black activists argued that the objects and activities of home facilitated the transition from slavery to freedom, and ultimately demonstrated black Americans' capacity for citizenship. Even poor black southerners believed their domestic objects and dwellings would help finally establish the

rights denied them under slavery. Freedom promised social and legal freedom, and black Americans sought to make free homes by instilling comfort, security, and privacy. The materiality of home would help actualize the promises of emancipation. Considering the financial limitations of most formerly enslaved individuals, black homes after emancipation often visually resembled slave cabins in their small size and crude construction. Yet over time, certain improvements and additions—like fences, filled crawl spaces, and wooden rather than earthen floors—made free homes more comfortable, healthful, and (at least from appearances) secure. The objects of home likewise distinguished a free home from a slave one. Freedom allowed formerly enslaved women and men (whose previous acquisition of goods had been constrained by many forces) to demonstrate their identity and their status through the consumption and display of domestic goods. Material culture went beyond reflecting one's identity; for black Americans, consumerism became an opportunity to declare what freedom and even citizenship meant. Examining the ideas, structures, objects, and images of free black dwellings after emancipation reveals the centrality of home to the meaning and experience of freedom.

White terrorist groups clung to slave holders' belief in the open nature of black homes and lashed out violently (chapter 5). The racialized ideology of home had deep roots, extending and evolving in the postbellum era as white supremacists attacked free dwellings, people, and ideas. After emancipation, white men continued to look to black homes as sites to declare political power. But black homes were no longer open only to owners. White terrorists enacted a horrific campaign of violence against black homes and their inhabitants in the Reconstruction South. Free black homes represented the economic

and social progress of formerly enslaved people, and were therefore potent targets of violence. During Reconstruction, white terrorists redefined black homes not as domestic private spaces but as public battlefields for white supremacy. These men argued that surveillance and intrusion into black dwellings was necessary to defend white homes from the very real possibility of racial violence. Targeting homes was a purposeful tactic meant to hit black Americans and their white allies in a particularly vulnerable place. White supremacists knew, as sources like the Ku Klux Klan trials clearly show, the significance that black southerners gave their homes. Black Americans had assumed that with freedom, their homes would no longer be subject to unwanted surveillance and intrusion; they would finally enjoy the privacy that was too long denied them. But by displaying continued control over black spaces and bodies in freedom, white southern men hoped to deny those rights to black individuals, and thereby preserve the racial, gender, and class system from which they derived their power.

As the hopes and violence of Reconstruction morphed in the last decades of the nineteenth century, black and white activists with divergent motives continued to focus on the black home (chapter 6). The image and concept of black homes were central to the movements of racial uplift and white supremacy in the late nineteenth century. As white southerners revoked citizenship rights and pushed black citizens out of government in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the black home functioned as an important haven from a heartless world and a scene in the cause of racial uplift. Black periodicals argued that the home was the location where men and especially women could first and best enact change in the world. Black women's crusade against the one-room cabin demonstrated the widespread belief that the creation and maintenance of "good" homes

were directly connected to the broader struggles of African Americans in the Jim Crow South. Black women hoped to eradicate the one-room cabin from the southern landscape; this particular housing form had long been associated with slavery, and thus stood as a material continuation of the injustices of slavery on black families. Additionally, black activists utilized images of past and present black homes to reinforce the real and potential progress of their people. In so doing, black activists hoped to improve not only the image of the black race, but their people's position in the American social and political structure. White supremacists likewise used the image of black homes, especially those southern one-room cabins, but did so to provide physical evidence of the inability or unwillingness of black Americans to progress beyond slavery. Omnipresent in the Lost Cause literary and visual culture of the late nineteenth century, the past and present black home became fodder for those seeking to reestablish the inequitable racial structure that undergirded slavery.

From anti-slavery to racial uplift, proslavery ideology to white supremacy, the black home was central to the most important debates of the nineteenth century. For women and men, black and white, home was instrumental to their private and public pursuits of liberty, citizenship, and rights. More than just an idea, black homes were diverse physical structures and spaces in which enslaved and free Americans constructed challenges to the racist system that sought to dehumanize and degrade them. These battles created lasting effects for twentieth- and twenty-first-century Americans. In particular, the racialized ideology of slaveholders and white terrorists has significantly shaped our modern legal and cultural conceptions of home and privacy. As we continue

to grapple with the perpetuation of white supremacy, it is essential to explore how those in the nineteenth century created and challenged racist systems.

CHAPTER ONE

"Search Every Negro Cabin":
Racializing the Rights of Home in the Antebellum South

"The best part of a journey is the home-coming," wrote Sara Agnes Rice Pryor in 1908, more than six decades after marrying the pro-slavery and later Lost Cause champion Roger Atkinson Pryor. Recalling her own history, Sara affectionately discussed her aunt and uncle's Hanover, Virginia, mansion. She longed for "the dear familiar house," "the perfect peace, leisure, relaxation," and "affectionate, cheerful servants."[24] (Figure 1.1) Sara's memories of an idyllic past reveal that the ideal home for elite, white southerners necessitated slavery and black bodies in private, white spaces. This combination of intimacy and domination may explain why, as Sara Pryor's daughter, Marie, remembered a decade later, "the old-time Virginian loved privacy like an Englishman." Marie concluded that wealthy white Virginians, like her uncle-in-law Izard Bacon Rice, fretted about their privacy, property, and safety, and took measures to ensure they were protected.[25] This included building their houses secluded from neighbors or the main road, even as they treasured grand entrance ways, like that of Rice's home, The Oaks.[26] Indeed, in the 1840s Rice commissioned a number Greek and Gothic Revival additions to his home, including a three-bay façade and pointed-arch parlor door and

[24] Sara Agnes Rice Pryor, *My Day: Reminiscences of a Long Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909), 69–70.
[25] Marie Gordon (Pryor) Rice, "Reminiscences" (1920), 3, Virginia Historical Society (VHS).
[26] Formerly known as the South Isle plantation, changes in the course of the river necessitated a change in name. See Arthur L. Thiele, *A History of South Isle Plantation (The Oaks), Charlotte County, Virginia* (1977), VHS.

windows, designed to evoke the owner's power and control.[27] (Figure 1.2) These stylistic enhancements did not extend to the slave dwellings on the plantation, two of which still stand in contrast to and in sight of Rice's impressive mansion.[28]

Elite white southerners struggled to maintain the often competing imperatives of privacy from and surveillance over their enslaved property. White southerners, like their northern counterparts, gave great meaning to home and embedded white supremacy into its meaning, space, and physical structure. To express and maintain their power, white southerners denied the rights of home to the enslaved through cultural, spatial, and violent mechanisms. While slave owners and the dominant white society did not necessarily prevent enslaved women and men from building homes under the constraints of slavery, they did deny them rights of home associated with freedom: privacy, comfort, and protection. White southerners published editorials asserting that enslaved individuals did not need the rights of home. In their private lives, elite slave holders arranged their plantations and constructed domestic buildings to proclaim white freedom and black slavery, thereby ensuring that slave homes were not recognized or respected. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their techniques shifted at moments when slavery and the racial structure supporting it were directly challenged, particularly in times of intensifying anti-slavery support and rumored or real slave insurrection. Still, certain violent methods transcended the period; white southerners continually relied on

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[27] Hill Studio, P.C., "Historic Architectural Survey of Charlotte county, Virginia" (June 1998), 48. Accessed at http://www.charlotteva.com/pdfs/historic_survey.pdf. For more on the symbolism of Greek and Gothic Revival architecture in the US, see Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944); Roger G. Kennedy, *Greek Revival America* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1989); Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Greek Revival & Romantic* (Beehive Press, 1996); Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997); Gerald L. Foster, *American Houses: A Field Guide to the Architecture of the Home* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004).

[28] The 1840 US Census lists Rice's enslaved population at 27. Rice moved into the Oaks in the mid-1840s, but the 1850 Census does not list the number of enslaved laborers on his plantation.

imprisonment, surveillance, and intrusion in black spaces, methods that refuted any presumption that the enslaved had privacy, security, or safety in their dwellings. Not all actively participated in the denial of home rights to the enslaved; owners regarded slave dwellings as non-autonomous private spaces not governed by enslaved inhabitants but by themselves.[29] Owners decided to whom these spaces would be opened or closed, thereby denying enslaved individuals the right to privacy in their own homes. Claiming their rights to home while denying those rights to the enslaved created a racialized understanding of home, one that affected how white southerners regarded and interacted with black homes. These effects lasted long after emancipation but their roots lie in the earliest years of the republic.

Historians have long examined how white southerners rooted white supremacy and slavery into their private lives, and how private spheres significantly influenced the public. Three particular issues have long absorbed scholars' attention. First, historians have questioned how black labor in the white household influenced personal experiences and collective ideologies of race and slavery.[30] Second, scholars have examined how the familial and household structures of black and white plantation residents simultaneously upheld and challenged the institution of slavery.[31] Third, scholarly attention has focused

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[29] This concept of non-autonomous private comes from Saidiya V. Hartman. In particular, she describes postbellum black domestic spaces as "a threshold between the public and private rather than a fortified private sphere." The same was certainly true for enslaved black homes, which were (from the perspective of the dominant white culture) a kind of hybrid of public and private. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 160.

[30] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2010), esp. chapter 1; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[31] Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina*

on how the codification of patriarchy, the redefinition of slavery as a "private" matter, and the dual legal understandings of enslaved as property and person shaped southern society.[32] Yet the significance of home to these processes has been widely overlooked. In particular, white southerners sought to extinguish enslaved claims to freedom by limiting their claims to the rights of home. The cultural, spatial, and violent constraints placed on slave homes illuminates the multiple ways in which white southerners attempted to make real their racist belief system. If ideology is, as Mark Leone put it, "the taken-for-granteds that mask or facilitate unequal relations between groups of people," the racialized nature of privacy, protection, and comfort underscored pro-slavery ideology and the racial system it supported.[33]

Those defending the institution of slavery experienced unease during the formative years of the United States, as white Americans questioned slavery's place in the new nation. Once their right to own human property was relatively secure with the passage of the US Constitution, elite slave owners—including most of the "founders" themselves—debated how they could best maintain the security of and security from their property. While the law did not explicitly provide the rights of home or privacy for any American in the antebellum era, pervasive cultural and legal proclamations about citizenship made clear the overwhelming belief that white Americans were entitled to protected homes. Their own privacy had been written into law with the Fourth

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Low Country (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[32] Jenny Bourne Wahl, *The Bondsman's Burden: An Economic Analysis of the Common Law of Southern Slavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Ariela J. Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[33] Mark P. Leone, "The Archaeology of Ideology: Archaeological Work in Annapolis Since 1981," in *Historical Archaeology of the Chesapeake*, eds. Paul Shackel and Barbara J. Little (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 219.

Amendment to the US Constitution, granting their homes, possessions, and themselves protection from unreasonable searches and seizures. This amendment proceeded from the castle doctrine, a tenet of English common law, which argued that every man's home was his castle and every man king of his own home.[34] White Americans seeking to link citizenship to whiteness racialized this doctrine, arguing that every *white* man's home was a castle that deserved security and privacy. This racialized doctrine took on an additional layer in the South, since slavery maintained that not only was every man's home his castle, but the homes of those he owned were part of his kingdom as well. But maintaining security *from* property was a more difficult task. The Age of Revolutions presented very real examples of slave rebellion that sought to upend not only the institution but its inequitable racial structure. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, elite slave owners altered their plantations to better protect themselves, their property, and the institution of slavery by embedding racial difference in the landscape.

This was not a new phenomenon, for elite slave owners in places like Virginia had long projected power through the landscape.[35] But a confluence of factors in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries prompted a shift in the way that many slave owners approached the plantation landscape. Economic, political, technological, and agricultural changes affected the thought process of slaveholders in the new southern states. Historical archaeologist J. W. Joseph has shown that changes in tidal rice

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[34] William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* from whence the castle doctrine originated, could be found in the libraries of elite slaveholders like Georgian Charles P. Crawford, who kept a worldly collection of literature and law books. Charles P. Crawford, Notebook, Huntington Library (HL). Blackstone's *Commentaries* was a favorite text among educated antebellum southerners, and his description of the castle doctrine would have been known among them. See Joan Dayan, "Poe, Persons, and Property," in *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*, eds. J. Gerald Kennedy and Liliane Weissberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123/ftnt 7.

[35] See, for example, Rhys Issac, *The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

agriculture and the proliferation of the ideology of the Industrial Revolution prompted South Carolina lowcountry rice planters, who had formerly given enslaved laborers more control over their domestic sphere, to relocate remote slave villages within their domain.[36] Joseph also argues that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these planters no longer needed to assert racial difference through the landscape once a series of laws were passed securing slavery and white supremacy, and thus felt more comfortable bringing slave dwellings closer to their own.[37] Yet this also happened to be a time period when the racial order was challenged, particularly as the Haitian Revolution and the threat of insurrection turned the racial underpinnings of slavery on its head. Even though certain local, state, and national laws helped codify the place of slavery in southern society, it was still not secure. David Babson has shown through his investigations of the Tanner Road settlement on Limerick Plantation in South Carolina, that greater interest in and control over previously ignored peripheral slave settlements in the Federal Era reveals the desire of planters to command greater control over the dwellings and lives of enslaved people.[38] Thus slave owners considered it imperative to control the living and laboring spaces of enslaved people during the uneasy time of the Federal Era, when the national and global security of slavery was unknown.

And so elite slave owners adopted several spatial and architectural strategies to display racial difference and control as a method of further securing the continuation of slavery. These strategies were at times contradictory, yet the main goal was to both set

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[36] J. W. Joseph, "Resistance and Compliance: CRM and the Archaeology of the African Diaspora," *Historical Archaeology* 38, no. 1 (2004): 21.
[37] J. W. Joseph, "White Columns and Black Hands: Class and Classification in the Plantation Ideology of the Lowcountry of Georgia and South Carolina," *Historical Archaeology* 27, no. 3 (1993): 67.
[38] David W. Babson, "Plantation Ideology and the Archaeology of Racism: Evidence from the Tanner Road Site (38BK416), Berkeley County, South Carolina," *South Carolina Antiquities* 19, nos. 1&2 (1987): 35–47.

themselves apart from and yet maintain control over black spaces. Colonial plantation architecture (roughly 1730–1790) often reflected the broader trends of social stratification by isolating slave quarters along the peripheries of the plantation, as was the case with the Stephen West's colonial-era plantation Darnall's Delight/The Woodyard in Prince George's County, Maryland.[39] Literally seeing these spaces as separate was a method of distancing black from white. For example, two eighteenth-century Virginia plantations—Howard's Neck and Stratford Hall—shielded the slave quarters from the main house's line of sight using trees and/or other buildings.[40]

Both of these choices—isolating spatially and visually—remained popular for plantation arrangement in the early Republic. Architectural drawings commissioned at the turn of the nineteenth century clearly show the desire of Waller Holladay of Prospect Hill in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, to maintain separation between white and black dwellings. Holladay isolated the sites of slave life and labor from the main house, even while recognizing and sanctioning the close interactions between owner and owned in the domestic sphere. Part of this stemmed from the growing concern of the influence of African Americans on the habits of white Americans. Eighteenth-century travelers, for instance, remarked that the language and manners of white men and women suffered due to close interaction with their enslaved laborers.[41] And so physical separation was necessary, something that unintentionally provided the enslaved with a semblance of privacy from the eyes of their owner. The archaeological and textual records are unclear

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[39] The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Plantation Analysis," in *Antebellum Plantations in Prince George's County: A Historic Context and Research Guide* (June 2009), 100–101.
[40] Dell Upton, "Slave Housing in 18th-century Virginia: A Report to the Department of Social and Cultural History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution" (1982), 37–37a, Library of the Division of Home and Community Live, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution (NMAH).
[41] Ibid., 44–45.

as to whether spatial separation was the result of white preferences, or whether it might have also been a result of concessions to black preferences. The Prospect Hill design, in the words of historian Henry Sharp, "shielded the [white] family's view not only from the appearance of the [slave quarter], but also from…its ownership."[42] The plantation layout did not only reflect the masters' preferences; surely the enslaved desired trees or hills shielding their communities from white observation. In certain cases, the spatial separation benefited both white and black inhabitants, giving both a semblance of privacy. Yet even so, it is important to remember that Holladay still had the right to interfere and intrude in the slave dwellings whenever he wished.

Others built barriers to separate white spaces from black while still maintaining close supervision. In analyzing the view from the front porch of George Mason's Gunston Hall in northern Virginia, Terrence Epperson maintains that the strategic placement of over two hundred cherry trees in the mid eighteenth century separated the civilized world of the main house from the uncivilized in slave dwellings, thereby asserting Mason's dominance and superiority over his enslaved laborers. At the same time, Mason purposefully constructed slave dwellings in rigid lines to enhance supervision of these spaces and those within them. Even though he sought to distance himself physically and visually from his enslaved laborers, he also sought to maintain surveillance and control of these same people.[43] These spaces, after all, were a part of the plantation, and must be incorporated even as they were concealed from sight. These

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[42] Henry Kerr Sharp, "An Architectural Portrait: Prospect Hill, Spotsylvania County, Virginia" (MA thesis, University of Virginia, 1996), 71–83, quote from 74, VHS.
[43] Terrence W. Epperson, "Constructing Difference: The Social and Spatial Order of the Chesapeake Plantation," in *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 169–71.

desires, though in some ways contradictory, were commonly held by elite slave owners. George Washington likewise rearranged a number of the buildings on his estate to improve the overseer's surveillance of enslaved men and women.[44] Another founding father, Thomas Jefferson, built Mulberry Row—a procession of buildings for enslaved living and laboring—almost directly adjacent to the main house of Monticello, giving him easy access for surveillance or intrusion if desired.[45]

Jefferson thus kept the black dwellings in Mulberry Row near him, a tactic that some slave owners believed was more effective for safety than setting those structures far away. It was essential to detach one's self from the uncivilization of the enslaved, but the most important factor at play was the security of one's self, family, and property. This perspective, and the resultant movement of black spaces nearer to white and the constant surveillance of them, grew in popularity during the antebellum period. While many slave owners had arranged and managed their plantations in such a manner before the antebellum era, as exhibited by Jefferson's Mulberry Row among many others, increasing anxieties over the stability of slavery made this option particularly attractive. Certainly many large slave owners maintained a layout with slave quarters distinct and distant from the main house. Yet others moved slave dwellings *closer* to white spaces (either the main house or overseer's house), particularly in the antebellum era.[46] Investigating the underlying cultural and legal causes—including the strengthening of

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[44] Dennis J. Pogue, "The Domestic Architecture of Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon," *Winterthur Portfolio* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 13–14.

[45] Jefferson built Mulberry Row in three phases: Phase I, from 1769 to 1783, produced buildings integral to the construction of Monticello; Phase II, from 1791 to 1809, increased the number of slave dwellings and specialty work buildings, including a dairy; Phase III, 1810 to 1831, relocated various domestic and work buildings of enslaved people. Monticello has recently begun recreating Mulberry Row, including a slave cabin once inhabited by part of the Hemings family.

[46] For discussion of the many different plantation layouts, see John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

property rights, the growth of the abolition movement and reactive shifts in pro-slavery ideology, and increasing concerns over slave insurrection—helps reveal the various ways that white southerners denied the rights of home to the enslaved while simultaneously emphasizing the goodness of slavery, both of which were necessary in the pursuit of maintaining the institution.

By the 1830s, the rights of property for owner and enslaved had been firmly established: the owner had the rights to property in his enslaved laborers as he did with other types of property, and the enslaved had no formal legal rights to any kind of property.[47] Property was fiercely guarded under the rights rhetoric of white southerners, which gave owners the right to do with their property as they pleased.[48] The law recognized the double character of the enslaved as property and persons, and as such were considered dependent on the male patriarch.[49] Slavery, as declared in the 1829 North Carolina case *State v. Mann*, was a private matter, much like marriage.[50] Even as persons, then, enslaved men and women were under the charge of the *pater familias*. Culturally, autonomous personhood required property ownership, or at least the

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[47] For more on the strengthening of property rights through the ascension of state law in the 1830s, see Laura F. Edwards, *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), esp. chapter 8.

[48] James L. Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union: Slavery, Property Rights, and the Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[49] The term double character comes from a treatise on the law of slavery written by the young Thomas Reade Cobb, who divided his supposed-to-be two-volume treatise into slaves "as persons" and slaves "as property." Cobb died in the Confederate Army before he could finish the work. Thomas R. R. Cobb, *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America* (1858; reprint New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 83. Ariela Gross expands this characterization beyond just how white southerners imposed it onto enslaved people, and demonstrates how "double character" allowed enslaved people to influence the law. Gross, *Double Character,* esp. 3–5. See also Edwards, *The People and Their Peace*, esp. part II.

[50] A year later, the Supreme Court of North Carolina also confirmed the mastery of the husband over the wife, based on the private/domestic nature of marriage, in *Burgess v. Wilson* (1830).

possibility of it.[51] All white male individuals, free to legally own property, were thus autonomous agents. Although some southern writers maintained that, as Judge George M. Stroud proclaimed in his 1827 book, "the cardinal principle of slavery" was "that the slave is not to be ranked among *sentient* beings, but among *things,*" still enslaved laborers were considered, in some respects and contexts, persons under the law.[52] But as they could not formally own property, the dominant white society could deny their capacity for autonomy, freedom, and citizenship. As William Goodell argued in his 1853 book, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice*, if "the slave could possess property…he might become a man, and becoming such, cease to be a slave." By "man," Goodell is referring not to the humanity of an enslaved person but to autonomy. The idea that an enslaved individual could have property, Goodell noted, would be equivalent to "the idea that the slave has *rights*."[53] To grant enslaved people formal property ownership, to grant them autonomy over their things and their homes, would be to acknowledge their capacity for citizenship and freedom.

Of course, in reality enslaved individuals did possess property, even if they did not legally own it, indicating a kind of social acceptance of the enslaved's unofficial property possession. Historians such as Roderick McDonald and Dylan Penningroth have

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[51] The "personhood theory" stems from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, but was most forcefully put forward by the scholar Margaret Jane Radin, who defined it as the view that property is essential for an individual to "achieve proper self-development—to be a *person*." Margaret Jane Radin, "Property and Personhood," *Stanford Law Review* 34 (1982): 957. Although this theory has often been seen as more inclusive and progressive than the traditional utilitarian and economically focused property theories, scholars such as Daniel Sharfstein have shown how it also can be used to justify and even motivate violent property defense. Daniel J. Sharfstein, "Atrocity, Entitlement, and Personhood in Property," *Virginia Law* Review 98, no. 3 (May 2012): 635–90.

[52] George M. Stroud, *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery in the Several States of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Kimber and Sharpless, 1827), 22–23.

[53] William Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice; Its Distinctive Features Shewn by Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, & Illustrative Facts* (London: Clarke, Beeton & Company, 1853), 81. Emphasis original.

shown that enslaved people did "own" property, such as clothing, livestock, and domestic goods.[54] This is obvious when one reads claims made by former slaves for property taken by the Union Army during the Civil War. Former slave Richard Cummings testified that in Liberty Country, Georgia, a man named Thompson owned about twenty-five enslaved individuals and "most of them owned some property," though Thompson forbade them from owning horses.[55] Testifying on behalf of the formerly enslaved Ceraphin Lacase, whose property was taken by the Union Army, Dick Richards proclaimed that their former owner, Narcisse Prudhomme of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, "used to give us the privilege of acquiring property and all of us had property. My master never interfered with our rights of property." Prudhomme corroborated this testimony, claiming that the property was indeed Ceraphin's.[56] Property possession, it was hoped, could partially satiate enslaved people's desire for goods and autonomy, and thereby lessen the likelihood of desertion and other forms of resistance.

This acceptance or ambivalence towards enslaved people's property possession also functioned as a pro-slavery retort to anti-slavery arguments about the cruelty of slavery. Henry Hughes, a prominent pro-slavery advocate, went so far as to maintain that enslaved individuals could in fact own property, noting that, "The right of property, is

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[54] Roderick McDonald, *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on The Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[55] Testimony of Richard Cummings, 28 February 1874, claim of Richard Cummings, Liberty Co. Ga. case files, Approved Claims, ser. 732, Southern Claims Commissions, 3rd Auditor RG 217, I-296, Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland. Dozens of testimonies from Georgia, Louisiana, and South and North Carolina confirm that this practice was fairly widespread across the South.

[56] Claim of Ceraphin Lacase, 1876, Natchitoches Parish, La., Approved Claims, Southern Claims Commission, National Archives, accessed through Fold3, quote from page 22.

warranted to warrantees [enslaved people]."[57] While most pro-slavery advocates would not want to associate any "right" with the enslaved, many did utilize the position that enslaved men and women could culturally (not legally) possess property, including their own dwelling. Eliza Holladay, daughter of Waller Holladay of Prospect Hill, wrote in letters about the dwellings of her father's enslaved laborers, noting specifically Harriot's and Jim's houses. Doing so implied that, on some level, Holladay afforded Harriot and Jim an unofficial right of possession.[58] This unofficial possession of cabins by enslaved individuals became a common theme in mid nineteenth century literature.[59] Even as families were ripped apart, these cultural examples of home "ownership" supported the pro-slavery argument that the enslaved exhibited a deep commitment to their physical dwellings. Pro-slavery advocates maintained that enslaved individuals were so deeply connected to their "homes" that they desired to stay in their dwellings and thus in slavery, regardless of the opportunity to leave. A common refrain from owners, and to some extent from formerly enslaved people, is that slaves had an especially intense relationship to home. Ex-slaveholders from Antigua reinforced that "peculiar" attachment to home, noting that the "[l]ove of home is very remarkable in the negroes," and that "they have very strong local attachments. They love their little hut, and will endure almost any hardship before they will desert that spot."[60] This certainly was true in many cases, but in

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[57] Henry Hughes, *Treatise on Sociology: Theoretical and Practical* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1854), in *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830–1860*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 254. Hughes tries to apply the positivism of Auguste Comte and logic of sociology to prove his position, which is where language of warrantor/warrantee comes from.

[58] See Sharp, "An Architectural Portrait: Prospect Hill, Spotsylvania County, Virginia," 78.

[59] Examples include Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly* and one of the many pro-slavery responses to it, Mary Henderson Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin; or, Southern Life as it Is*.

[60] Quotations from S. Barnard, Dr. Daniels, and an unnamed planter, in Aaron, *The Light and Truth of Slavery, Aaron's History* (Worcester, Mass.: The Author, 1845), 32.

proclaiming it pro-slavery writers sought an argument for the maintenance of slavery. They still did not evince a respect for the homes that enslaved people built.

Even as enslaved individuals possessed property, southern courts and slave owners limited access to official ownership. Legal historians, such as Laura Edwards, have explored how enslaved men and women accessed and participated in local courts in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to protect their unofficial property.[61] With the growing power of state courts and the protection of property rights in the 1830s, enslaved individuals increasingly lost that possibility. Many continued to unofficially own property, an important reality as they struggled to live in the present and hope for free homes in the future. Yet as a piece of property, enslaved people could not truly own property, for the property of an owner's property was his property. As the slave code of Louisiana stated, an enslaved laborer could "possess nothing, nor acquire anything, but what must belong to this master."[62] This was particularly true with dwellings more than other property of the enslaved. The Virginian Richard Eppes allowed the possessions of his enslaved gardener, Frank, to be passed down to his wife and daughter after his death. Yet the dwelling they had inhabited together, the dwelling that Eppes called Frank's "home," was quickly "fitted up" and given to the new gardener, Stewart. Frank's family was forced out of their so-called home and another put in their place, all at the command of Eppes.[63] The property rights, both official and unofficial, of slave owners and their human property therefore undergirded the denial of the rights of home to the enslaved.

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[61] Edwards, *The People and Their Peace*, esp. part II.
[62] Civil Code, art. 35, quoted in Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice,* 9.
[63] December 19, 1852, Richard Eppes Diary, #291, section 41, Eppes Family Papers, VHS.

Some slave owners used their own plantation landscapes as arguments for the pro-slavery belief in the positive effects of slavery on black homes. Changes in pro-slavery ideology, in large part motivated by the growing abolitionist movement in the 1830s, coincided with changes in many plantation landscapes.[64] A new emphasis on paternalism and morality led some owners to argue that physically bringing their black "family" closer to their white was an example of their paternalism.[65] Although some owners continued the colonial-era position of distancing slave cabins for the purpose of distinguishing supposedly civilized white spaces from the labor and living of the enslaved, others arranged slave dwellings closer to the main house.[66] In the 1830s Josiah Collins III, the owner of the Somerset Plantation in North Carolina, built a row of twenty-one cabins just a short distance from his mansion.[67] When Waller Holladay's son, James, became owner of Prospect Hill in 1860, he implemented significant changes to the

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[64] As Drew Gilpin Faust has shown, the pro-slavery movement shifted in the post-1830 era from a focus on property rights (as seen through Thomas R. Dew's influential "Abolition of Negro Slavery" in 1832) to an increasing interest in showing slave owners as moral stewards and father figures. Drew Gilpin Faust, "Introduction: The Proslavery Argument in History," in *The Ideology of Slavery*, 23. For a comprehensive investigation of proslavery ideology, including its mythology, see Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

[65] Eugene Genovese argued more than four decades ago that paternalism was a set of mutual obligations accepted by both master and slave that gave owners the right to govern. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974)*. Other scholars, however, maintain it was less a set of relations between master and slave (or capital and labor) than an upper-class ideology. After an in-depth comparison of Prussian Junkers (landed nobility) and planters from the US South, Shearer Davis Bowman concludes that "the label of paternalism should be limited to a type of upper-class ideology, one that persists into the late twentieth century and was widespread in the 19th-century Western world, urban as well as rural, free as well as slave." Shearer Davis Bowman, *Masters and Lords: Mid-Nineteenth Century US Planters and Prussian Junkers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 166.

[66] Andrew Jackson moved his family away from the uniform set of brick slave dwellings at his Hermitage Plantation in the 1820s. Previous to this re-arrangement, in what is known as the First Hermitage period between 1804 and 1821, Jackson's estate was more large farm than plantation, with his family living just 40 feet from his ten or twelve slaves in cabins. See Whitney L. Battle-Baptiste, "'In This Here Place': Interpreting Enslaved Homeplaces,"in *Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora*, eds. Akinwumi Ogundiran and Toyin Falola (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 237; and Brian W. Thomas, "Power and Community: The Archaeology of Slavery at the Hermitage Plantation," *American Antiquity* 63, no. 4 (October 1998), 539.

[67] Alisa Y. Harrison, "Reconstructing Somerset Place: Slavery, Memory and Historical Consciousness" (PhD Dissertation, Duke University, 2008), 32.

landscape, further establishing enslaved labor and living into the main house.[68] For those who observed the plantations, they would see how the enslaved were indeed part of the larger family.

Equally effective in the pursuit of demonstrating the goodness of slavery through slave dwellings was the concealment, rather than display, of those dwellings. As Clifton Ellis has argued, slaveholders constructed the built landscape in ways to conceal the inhumane and often brutal treatment vital to the continuation of slavery.[69] This included slave dwellings, where violent methods of imprisonment, surveillance, and intrusion were possible. Concealing could also limit an observer's exposure to the poor living conditions that many enslaved individuals were forced to endure, thereby disproving the abolitionists' critique through evasion. Constructing barriers like trees or fences between white and black spaces could shield the violence and inhumanity of slavery from observers, making the appearance of slavery very different from the reality.

Slave owners sought various methods with which to instill their mastery and supremacy, and part of that included improving the surveillance capacities on their plantations. Some slave owners believed that enhanced surveillance was necessary as the specter of slave rebellion seemed to grow during the antebellum era. Owners who were worried about the potential for insurrection and the resultant destruction of white life and property might rearrange their plantation landscapes in hopes of better controlling their enslaved population. Archaeologists have argued that, in the 1820s, after the Denmark

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[68] Sharp, "An Architectural Portrait: Prospect Hill, Spotsylvania County, Virginia," 81. Date of property transferal comes from National Historic Register of Places Nomination Form, Prospect Hill, 1982.
[69] Clifton Ellis, "Building for 'Our Family, Black and White': The Changing Form of the Slave House in Antebellum Virginia," in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*, eds. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010), 141–59.

Vesey plot shook South Carolina, some lowcountry planters reevaluated their landscapes, and decided that distancing black spaces from white was the best guard against slave violence.[70] The owner of Middleburg Plantation in the lowcountry rearranged slave dwellings in the 1820s from nearby, neat rows of buildings to small clusters on the periphery of the property. Archaeologist Kerri S. Barile posits that it was the fear of slave rebellion, made real through the very close relationship of three enslaved men at Middleburg with the 44 enslaved men involved with the Denmark Vesey Plot, that motivated the owners to move the slave dwellings. Barile cites five more examples of lowcountry South Carolina planters relocating slave dwellings away from main white houses after the discovery of the Denmark Vesey plot.[71] Whether it was indeed fear that pressed these owners to rearrange their plantations is questionable, as documentation of this motivation is sparse at best. Yet one example does point to the possibility that anxiety over slave rebellion could motivate plantation rearrangement. Frederick Poyas, owner of the Limerick Plantation in South Carolina, reorganized the landscape and created a slave settlement near his home that he called Tanner Road. Yet between 1820 and 1830, Poyas reversed his decision, removing slave dwellings from the nearby Tanner Road settlement to small clusters on the plantation's periphery.[72] Archaeologists do not have a firm date on exactly when Poyas moved the slave dwellings, and thus it seems imprecise to attribute the rearrangement specifically to fear caused by the Denmark

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[70] Scholars vigorously debate whether a plot actually existed outside the minds of white southerners. See the forums "The Making of a Slave Conspiracy, Part 1," *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (October 2001): 913–76; "The Making of the Slave Conspiracy, Part 2," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 135–202.

[71] Kerri S. Barile, "Hegemony within the Household: The Perspective from a South Carolina Plantation," in *Household Chores and Household Choices: Theorizing the Domestic Sphere in Historical Archaeology*, eds. Kerri S. Barile and Jamie C. Brandon (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 129–36.

[72] Ibid., 135.

Vesey rebellion. Still, it is clear that Poyas worried about insurrection on his own property, writing that he was worried his enslaved laborers would riot "without anyone to control them."[73] That fear of rebellion likely did propel the multiple rearrangements of his plantation landscape, as he worked through exactly which layout would be best for controlling his laborers. In either case, he was hoping to control his enslaved laborers through enhanced surveillance, whether that took place closer to or farther from his own home.

Surveillance is a loaded term in contemporary scholarly discourse, but in reference to southern slavery, it is the sustained observation of the movement and actions of individual enslaved bodies in space for the purpose of controlling those individuals and punishing misbehavior.[74] Beginning in the era of the early Republic, prison and asylum reformers imposed surveillance on inmates as part of their plans for a more humane and effective system. This modernization of institutional structures was a part of Victorian society at large, where, as Anna Vemer Andrzejewski makes clear, surveillance was understood as one of the ways to make sense of a rapidly changing world. Yet

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[73] Quote in David W. Babson, *The Tanner Road Settlement: The Archaeology of Racism on Limerick Plantation* (Columbia: South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1988), 68.

[74] This definition is derived from studies of the relationship between surveillance and architecture. For Michel Foucault, surveillance is by definition disciplinary, a means of gaining and exercising power by determining the movement of bodies in space. Surveillance, in this definition, ultimately functions as a method of control, often compelled by sexual desire. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977). There has been much critical reexamination of Foucault's interpretations, including the lack of agency, resistance, and contingency. See, for example, essays in *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine, and the Body*, eds. Colin Jones and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1994). Additionally, Foucault's focus on the singularly disciplinary function of surveillance has recently come under scrutiny from scholars looking to understand the more benign operations of surveillance in the modern world, which has led them to investigate surveillance not just in institutional settings but in a range of building types and everyday environments, including homes. See, for instance, Anna Vemer Andrzejewski, *Building Power: Architecture and Surveillance in Victorian America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008). An important contribution to surveillance studies is the application of theories and historical analyses of race and slavery. In particular, the work of Simone Browne reveals a distinct form of "racializing surveillance" that aimed to police racial norms. Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 16–18.

surveillance was also obviously antagonistic to the growing individualism taking hold in antebellum American society.[75] But the rights of the individual did not apply to inmates or, from the perspective of most white southerners, to enslaved people.

The connections between prisons and slavery, therefore, include surveillance, as well as containment and intrusion.[76] Like the growing nineteenth-century prison system, slavery was a panoptic institution fostered by the visibility, supervision, and judgment of individuals.[77] In all realms of life, owners desired to ensure that enslaved individuals were visible, that they were being watched, and that the potential for punishment was strong. The spaces of slavery were often constructed to enhance these three elements, to keep enslaved men and women confined to certain areas of visibility where surveillance and intrusion were possible. Containment, as historian Stephanie Camp has argued, was an essential method of control for owners.[78] The landscape, therefore, contributed to the discussion as to how slaveholders, and the larger US South, could control the enslaved while also protecting white individuals in a slave society. Violence meant to uphold an owner's power was enacted through the spatial and material elements of the plantation. As Paul Farnsworth has argued, most of the archaeological studies of African American

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[75] Andrzejewski, *Building Power*, esp. introduction.

[76] The "carceral landscape" of slavery, as Walter Johnson refers to it, makes clear that enslavement was a spatial and material condition, along with an economic and legal one. Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 209–43. Scholars have revealed the roots of the US prison industrial complex in the racial structures that supported slavery. See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010). Some, like Dennis Childs, show a direct line from plantation to prison. Dennis R. Childs, *Slaves of the State: Black Incarceration from the Chain Gang to the Penitentiary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[77] J.B.C. Axelrod and Rise B. Axelrod suggest these three broad criteria for determining whether an institution is panoptic. J.B.C. Axelrod and Rise B. Axelrod, "Reading Frederick Douglass through Foucault's Panoptic Lens: A Proposal for Teaching Close Reading," *Pacific Coast Philology* 39 (2004): 117.

[78] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), esp. 28–34.

life have glossed over or ignored the violence of plantation slavery.[79] Not only did violence take place against psyches and bodies; it took place against and within dwellings, in particular through imprisonment, surveillance, and intrusion into black homes, creating non-autonomous private spaces. These violent methods into and against slave dwellings enacted a racialized understanding of home that denied the rights of home to the enslaved.

By the late eighteenth century, most elite planters implemented landscape arrangements that allowed for and encouraged imprisonment, surveillance, and intrusion. In a number of plantations already discussed, we can see how planters sought to ensure the control of their laborers. In South Carolina lowcountry during the 1820s, planters who relocated slave dwellings away from the main house often arranged those dwellings along streets so as to more easily surveil movement between them.[80] The use of "streets" to enhance surveillance was believed to be an effective strategy by the 1830s, when agricultural editorials began advising owners to arrange dwellings in such a way.[81] Those streets would be surveiled most often by the owner or an overseer, whose own dwelling typically sat near the dwellings of the enslaved. An owner typically included an intermediary surveillance mechanism within the landscape to ensure the supervision of black spaces. While certain local conditions and personal preferences could lead to dispersal rather than concentrated settlements, the most common plantation design in the nineteenth-century US South placed service buildings and slave quarters in square or

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[79] Paul Farnsworth, "Brutality or Benevolence in Plantation Archaeology," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 4, no. 2 (June 2000): 145–58.
[80] Joseph, "Resistance and Compliance: CRM and the Archaeology of the African Diaspora," 21.
[81] For more on how pro-slavery ideologues advocated the building of "streets," see section 8, *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South,* ed. James O. Breeden (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

rectangular patterns near the owner's or overseer's house.[82] On the North Carolina Somerset Plantation in 1830s, the owner's choice to separate a row of twenty-one cabins from his mansion using only a fence and walkway, similar to the walkway that separated Jefferson's Monticello from Mulberry Row, made clear his right to surveil through a constant gaze and possible intrusion into the slave dwellings.[83]

Slave dwellings could also be constructed to facilitate surveillance and confinement. One Virginian planter succinctly described the "ends aimed at in building negro cabins" as "First, the health and comfort of the occupants; Secondly, the convenience of nursing, surveillance, discipline, and the supply of wood and water; and thirdly, economy of construction."[84] Beneath the façade of paternalistic concern for the "comfort of the occupants" was economic incentive and desire for control. As archaeologist Larry McKee proposes, one of the primary motives of plantation management publications in advocating improved housing was to enhance the control of

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[82] This form, known as the "nucleated plantation village," put forth by cultural geographer Merle Prunty more than fifty years ago, has been substantiated as the predominant form of plantation design throughout the Americas. Merle Prunty, "The Renaissance of the Southern Plantation," *Geographical Review* 45, no. 4 (October 1955): 459–91. Theresa Singleton argues that the widespread adoption of this nucleated plantation design stemmed from a number of ideas circulating around the Atlantic World, specifically the transnational movements of western neoclassicism, plantation management (particularly housing improvements), and new surveillance technologies. Theresa A. Singleton, "Nineteenth-Century Built Landscape of Plantation Slavery in Comparative Perspective," in *The Archaeology of Slavery: A Comparative Approach to Captivity and Coercion*, ed. Lydia Wilson Marshall (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 96–110. I would add a fourth element to Singleton's list: the transnational fear of slave rebellion prompted by the first Haitian Revolution and reignited many times by real or imagined insurrections throughout the US South and Atlantic World. It should be noted that archaeologists and cultural geographers have determined that the nucleated plantation village form developed before the nineteenth century. Barry Higman has noted that by 1700 Jamaican plantations followed a similar pattern, with the owner or overseer's house central to the dwellings and sites of labor. Barry W. Higman, "The Spatial Economy of Jamaican Sugar Plantations: Cartographic Evidence from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of Historical Geography* 13, no. 1 (January 1987): 22. See also, Douglas V. Armstrong and Kenneth G. Kelly, "Settlement Patterns and the Origins of African Jamaican Society: Seville Plantation, St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica," *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 375–79.

[83] Harrison, "Reconstructing Somerset Place: Slavery, Memory and Historical Consciousness," 32.

[84] *Advice Among Masters*, 129.

enslaved people.[85] And control was maintained and exhibited through surveillance, which the Virginia planter above in fact noted as one of the core goals of building slave dwellings. Many within the plantation management movement advised that such an objective could be attained by constructing dwellings to enhance their surveillance potential. One planter-school teacher from Virginia recommended that owners build dwellings 40' by 20' with cross partitions, thereby separating this large building into 2 rooms of 12' by 10' on each side of a large central chimney, a construction that could "comfortably" fit 32 enslaved laborers. While this was a rather large number, a point that many worried about in regards to spreading disease, this planter argued that in "this way…a master may at night keep his slaves under the best control."[86]

Other architectural elements—like windows and doors—served to enhance the supervision of black dwellings. The use of windows instead of wooden shutters, for instance, opened the inside of the house to surveillance.[87] Confinement within these spaces would assist the surveillance process. Cyrus Bellus recalled that, even though his mother, father, and other enslaved laborers were able to "get out and have their fun and play" for a few hours a day, at every moment they were not working outdoors, "they had to be found in their house."[88] The physical buildings themselves could increase the ease

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[85] Larry McKee, "The Ideals and Realities Behind the Design and Use of 19th Century Virginia Slave Cabins," in *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honors of James Deetz*, eds. Anne Elizabeth Yentsch and Mary C. Beaudry (Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press, 1992), 195–213. Edward Chappell likewise argues that alterations in slave housing around the Atlantic World had more to do with economics and politics than a concern over the welfare of enslaved living conditions. Edward A. Chappell, "Accommodating Slavery in Bermuda," in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation*, 67–98.

[86] *Advice Among Masters*, 118.

[87] As Amy L. Young notes, the presence of window glass in more nineteenth-century slave dwelling excavations may simply be the result of the greater available of such glass in the nineteenth over eighteenth century. Amy L. Young, "Risk Management Strategies Among African-American Slaves at Locust Grove Plantation," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 1, no. 1 (March 1997): 6.

[88] Cyrus Bellus, *WPA Slave Narrative Project, Arkansas Narratives*, vol. II, pt. 1, 4, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 142.

of such supervision. One method was by building dwellings with only one door or opening. This would serve as both an entrance and exit, giving owners and overseers greater control over those within. Former slave George Womble remembered that the houses of field workers only had one door in the front because a second door would provide easy access "for a slave to slip out of the back way if the master or the overseer came to punish an occupant."[89] Physical evidence corroborates this practice, including extant cabins at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage Plantation in Tennessee and from the Hermitage Plantation north of Savannah, Georgia.[90] (Figures 1.3 & 1.4)

Archaeological evidence from a set of four cabins at Cannon's Point on St. Simon's Island, Georgia, also suggests this practice, as these cabins possessed at least one door with a plate stock lock.[91] The use of a lock is particularly interesting, and appears to have been a method of control employed at some medium- to large-sized plantations. In remembering Mat Alexander, the owner of a plantation near the Tyger River in South Carolina, Lucinda Miller noted that, "When the day's work was over, he would come to

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[89] George Womble, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Georgia Narratives*, vol. IV, pt. 4, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 188. Other slave narratives and memoirs support that this was a common feature in standalone dwellings. See Louis Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom* (Milwaukee: South Side Printing Company, 1897), 25-26; William H. Heard, *From Slavery to the Bishopric in the A.M.E. Church. An Autobiography* (Philadelphia: The A.M.E. Book Concern, 1928), 20; Roberta Manson, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. XI, pt. 2, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 103. Additionally, John Green, a former slave, claimed that many enslaved people around him believed that to enter and exit through the same door was a bad omen. John Patterson Green, *Recollections of the Inhabitants, Localities, Superstitions and Kuklux Outrages of the Carolinas* ([Cleveland]: 1880), 44, HL. There is also evidence that some standalone dwellings had two doors. Thomas Burton remembered his cabin to have had "two doors, both below; one on each side of the house." Thomas William Burton*, What Experience Has Taught Me; An Autobiography of Thomas William Burton* (Cincinnati: Press of Jennings and Graham, 1910), 18. It is less important which of these practices was more widely implemented, and more important that the one-door policy existed as a form of control and surveillance of enslaved people.

[90] Henry Ford purchased and moved two Hermitage slave quarters to Greenfield Village in the early twentieth century.

[91] John Solomon Otto and Augustus Marion Burns III, "Black Folks and Poor Buckras: Archeological Evidence of Slave and Overseer Living Conditions on an Antebellum Plantation," *Journal of Black Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 1983): 189.

their [enslaved laborers'] one-room log house and lock them up until next morning."[92] M.S. Fayman also recalled that, on the plantation near Frankfort, Kentucky, where she resided, slave dwellings "had iron rings firmly attached to the walls, through which an iron rod was inserted and locked each and every night, making it impossible for those inside to escape."[93] A planter and schoolteacher from Virginia advised in 1840 that if enslaved men and women frequently disobeyed an owner's nighttime curfew, then an overseer should nightly lock the doors of slave cabins to ensure compliance by those inside.[94] These were probably stock locks like those found at Cannon's Point, which were the most common and inexpensive doors locks in the eighteenth century.[95] But these were not the only types of lock likely used to imprison enslaved workers. A padlock described as a "slave lock" in the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History might have been used in a similar manner as a stock lock; in other words, to lock in chattel at night, whether it be human or animal stock.[96] (Figure 1.5) As this particular padlock contains a brass keyhole cover and sleeve, it most likely dates from sometime after 1840.[97] That timing is particularly striking, for about the same time in Cuba, Gerónimo Valdés—the captain-governor—promulgated his preference for barracks-style slave dwellings over separate slave houses, in large part because in the former (called

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[92] Lucinda Miller, *WPA Slave Narrative Project, South Carolina Narratives*, vol. XIV, pt. 3, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 192.
[93] M. S. Fayman, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Maryland Narratives*, vol. VIII, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 12.
[94] *Advice Among Masters,* 118.
[95] Ivor Noël Hume, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1969), 244.
[96] It is also possible this padlock was used to fasten a slave collar around an enslaved laborer's neck as punishment. William Goodell included a number of slave advertisements in his book on slave codes, one of which noted one enslaved man with a "drawing-chain, fastened around his ankle with a house-lock." Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice,* 203.
[97] Hume, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America,* 251.

barracones) the enslaved could be locked at night, thereby helping with control and surveillance, and thus giving owners a greater sense of security. Ultimately the 1843 proclamation requiring slaveholders to build new dwellings within which "all [enslaved persons] must be under lock and key at night" was not enforced, as Vales was recalled to Spain, but it signifies the greater Atlantic trend in the nineteenth century of instituting new surveillance and containment mechanisms in hopes of increasing safety and security for slave holders.[98]

The question as to whether these locks were used by the owner or the inhabitants is pertinent, though the source material is often unclear. Slaveholder Joseph Ball mentioned in a 1746 letter that his three slave dwellings should have "a good plank door with iron hinges, a good lock and key."[99] Dell Upton has interpreted this phrase to signify that enslaved inhabitants had control over these locks "that they could use to lock out their fellow slaves and even their masters."[100] It is not clear, though, whether the lock was located on the inside or outside of the cabin. Still, some enslaved individuals had access to locks. William, an enslaved laborer of the wealthy Virginia slaveholder Landon Carter, once tried to escape punishment by entering his dwelling and bolting the door, thus indicating that the lock was on the inside rather than outside of his cabin.[101] Some enslaved people even made use of their artisan skills to craft locks of their own, providing

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[98] Quoted in Singleton, "Nineteenth-Century Built Landscape of Plantation Slavery in Comparative Perspective," 94. While most studies of plantation landscape have been limited to the Anglo-American World, Theresa Singleton widens the perspective to include Latin American plantations, like those in Cuba, in her study of the global forces that shaped plantation landscape around the Atlantic World.
[99] Joseph Ball Letter Book, MS., Nov. 4, 1746, in Upton, "Slave Housing in 18th-century Virginia," 46.
[100] Upton, "Slave Housing in 18th-century Virginia," 46. Enslaved laborers in eighteenth-century Barbados had homemade wooden locks on their doors. Jerome S. Handler and Frederick W. Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 299.
[101] This did not stop the white men pursuing William. Landon Carter, *Diary*, 845, in Upton, "Slave Housing in 18th-century Virginia," 46.

a semblance of security for themselves.[102] Still, at the very least, locks were sometimes used to confine enslaved individuals against their will.

Beyond physically imprisoning enslaved laborers in their dwellings, white southerners who sought to improve the management of slave labor advised a range of surveillance techniques.[103] Certain architectural features could facilitate surveillance, including setting dwellings up on sills about three feet from the ground, thereby giving owners and overseers visual confirmation that such space was not co-opted by enslaved people to conceal unauthorized people or goods.[104] Additionally, subfloor pits—a common feature in many slave cabins—should be banned, as they accumulated what one planter characterized as "filth."[105] This regulation was likely not only meant to keep dwellings clean, but also to limit the number of interior concealed spaces available to enslaved laborers. One farmer-planter bluntly asserted that enslaved laborers should have "no place to stow away anything" in their dwellings.[106]

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[102] For more on locks used or created by enslaved people, see chapter 2.

[103] As James O. Breeden, editor of a collection of plantation management sources, makes clear, those who thought and wrote about slave management on this level never constituted a majority of slave owners and non-slave-owning white southerners. It is nearly impossible to know how widely circulated the journals and newspapers containing such advice were, and whether the advice was actually implemented. And even among those who thought and wrote about these issues, their conclusions often varied dramatically, to the point that opposite recommendations would be made about issues like health care and housing. Still, their general goal of implementing more systematic methods of enslaving permeated the culture, supporting and enhancing the belief system of paternalism that many in the South argued lay at the core of why slavery should continue. To better justify slavery in the face of increasing national criticism, slave owners must demonstrate why enslaved people were better off in slavery. For a general overview of the antebellum trend of slave management studies, see James O. Breeden, "Introduction," in *Advice Among Masters*, xvii-xxii.

[104] This elevating technique, recommended by a planter in 1850, also provided ventilation for the house, something regarded as healthful for inhabitants. Ibid., 120–21. Other examples of this recommendation in plantation management studies come from a published article in 1852 by a Lower South planter (Ibid., 124); in 1857 by a South Carolina planter (Ibid., 133), a Mississippi planter-physician (Ibid., 133–34), and a planter (Ibid., 134); in 1858 by a South Carolina planter (Ibid., 134); and in 1860 by a Georgia physician (Ibid., 136, 139).

[105] Ibid., 121.

[106] Ibid., 123.

As owners physically changed the landscape and constructed dwellings in ways to promote their own safety and control of the enslaved, they implemented additional methods of surveillance and intrusion of slave dwellings that complemented their efforts, including their own supervision and that of overseers and patrols. The reciprocal nature of the paternalistic relationship meant that owners provided adequate dwellings for enslaved laborers in return for the owner's (or owner's surrogate) right to surveil and enter that dwelling at any time. In his pro-slavery *Treatise of Sociology*, Henry Hughes described what he saw as the logical give-and-take of the master-slave relationship as it related to dwellings: "The warrantor [owner] has the power to order and establish the arrangement of habitations; to dispose families in suitable tenements according to health, peace, and economy; and for this to visit, inspect, and superintend dwellings-houses."[107] The frequency and intensity of an owner's gaze and physical body in slave homes varied for a multitude of reasons. Disinterest, dependence on hired help (like overseers), absenteeism, an aversion to seeing the condition of slave quarters or dwellings: many reasons could be given as to why an owner would not want to visit the domestic spaces of his or her enslaved laborers. Additionally, the reasons given by those who did visit were varied. Sam Aleckson recalled that his owner had at least two reasons for frequently strolling through the dwellings and quarter: "ostensibly to see how his people were getting on, and incidentally, to note that things were as they should be on the place."[108]

Owners often required that dwellings be inspected for cleanliness, one of the many excuses given to invade black homes. Although historian William Scarborough has

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[107] Hughes, *Treatise on Sociology,* 248.
[108] Sam Aleckson, *Before the War, and After the Union: An Autobiography* (Boston: Gold Mind Publishing Company, 1929), 58.

called slave owners "conscientious" for demanding their enslaved laborers keep clean homes, this need for such control came less from a beneficent intention and more from the belief that enslaved people were naturally inferior, in particular that they could not maintain clean and ordered dwellings.[109] In 1852, a planter in the Lower South declared that, "The habits of the negro by nature are filthy and careless…hence attention on the part of his owner becomes an imperative duty."[110] It was imperative that the master and/or overseer kept a close eye on slave dwellings; one planter-physician from Mississippi recommended weekly inspections for cleanliness.[111] Not only should the physical houses of enslaved people be standardized, an Alabama physician advised, but so should the "manner of living of among their negroes [be] regulated."[112] And owners took this to heart, requiring that activities typically defined in the antebellum era as private, including intercourse and domestic abuse, be monitored and, if necessary, punished. Richard Eppes recorded the results of a number of these domestic surveillances: "MR Rogers [overseer] report Solomon as having attempted a rape on little Jane, had him tied & striped, but concluded from evidence that the report was false. Had Henry & Petty whipped for adultery. Intended to have Milly whipped for striking her husband Davy but found that she was pregnant & therefore postponed it for the present."[113]

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[109] Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 178.
[110] *Advice Among Masters*, 124.
[111] Ibid., 120.
[112] Ibid.
[113] December 24, 1853, Richard Eppes Diary, #291, section 41, Eppes Family Papers, VHS. Michael L. Nicholls discussed Eppes's detailed system of plantation management, calling him a "rational and enlightened man who agonized over the realities of slave management." Michael L. Nicholls, "'In the Light of Human Beings': Richard Eppes and His Island Plantation Code of Laws," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 89, no. 1 (January 1981): 67.

The consistent refrain on the part of pro-slavery writers that slave dwellings were dirty not only emphasized the inferiority of enslaved people, it also denied enslaved women an essential part of nineteenth-century womanhood as defined by white Americans: the ability to "keep" house. Surveillance of houses was so necessary because enslaved women did not and could not maintain their households like white women. Of course, this perspective completely ignores the fact that it was enslaved women that kept these white homes clean. Similarly to containing enslaved laborers in their homes, slave holders could undercut enslaved women's claims to home by requiring they be present in white homes at any time. Pro-slavery ideologues at once constructed the image of the mammy—a stereotype built on the belief that enslaved women kept the white household running—and argued that these same women could not maintain their own households.[114] Implying that these women could not keep their own dwellings neat and tidy justified the need for surveillance of these spaces. The denial of their domesticity was a denial of their femininity. Racist ideologies proclaimed that black women were not women and black homes were not, in fact, homes. Instead, their bodies and dwellings were understood as open to surveillance, intrusion, and violence.[115] Whether it was a female slave owner checking on the kitchen or an overseer inspecting a cabin, it was assumed that only through white intervention would enslaved women and men maintain clean spaces.

At plantations with the resources to hire and keep an overseer, this human monitor surveilled the activities of enslaved people throughout the day. From eating to laboring to

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[114] For more on the creation of the mammy image, see Rupe Simms, "Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women," *Gender and Society* 15, no. 6 (Dec., 2001): 879–97.
[115] Thavolia Glymph argues that it was the practices of women in the household, particularly the violent practices of white women, which made a space public or private on an antebellum plantation. Glymph, *Within the Plantation Household*.

sleeping, the gaze of overseers was either present or possible. Overseers were to maintain a high-level of production by pushing enslaved laborers to keep a strict schedule and obey a list of rules meant to make them efficient work machines. This included the maintenance of one's dwelling, which slave owners regarded as essential to the health of their laborers. And so slave homes became a sight of surveillance by overseers.[116] Some owners elevated the overseer's house to provide a better position for surveillance, and the nucleated village arrangement of many medium and large plantations set the overseer's house in the midst of the living and laboring of the enslaved.[117] Owners often provided some guidance or written rules to overseers that slave dwellings be inspected as to ensure cleanliness and obedience. In a formbook printed for use by his overseers, Philip St. George Cocke of Virginia listed the duties of overseers and the extensive rules and regulations to be imposed on Cocke's enslaved laborers. The first and second edition of the formbook included provisions about the inspection of slave cabins that should take place every Sunday. It was essential that, "Cleanliness should be required of all in their clothing, houses, and yards… nothing can so much contribute to the good health of the negroes, as the strict enforcement of the system of discipline and police hereinafter prescribed." Under the heading "PLANTATION MANAGEMENT. POLICE," Cocke listed a number of duties his overseer's must complete each week. The seventh management or "police" activity the overseer was to undertake was that, "every Sunday

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[116] It was also advised that black drivers be employed on large plantations to maintain "quiet of the negro-houses…and generally for the immediate inspection of such things as the Overseer only generally superintends." Quote from John Spencer Bassett, *The Southern Plantation Overseer: As Revealed in His Letters* (Northampton, Mass.: Printed for Smith College, 1925), 30.

[117] On property historically owned by David Craufurd (Crawford) in Prince George's County, Maryland, a mid-eighteenth-century overseer's house stands on a high point of land, and would have been in close geographic proximity to a group of mid-nineteenth-century slave cabins. On smaller plantations, often without the help of an overseer, slave dwellings would be located closer to the owner's house. See The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Plantation Analysis," 100–101, 111, 115.

morning after breakfast, [he must] visit and inspect every quarter, see that the houses and yards are kept clean and in order, and that the families are dressed in clean clothes."[118] Cocke likely participated in the regional conversations about plantation management, taking from and influencing the advice that the "interior of their [enslaved] dwellings should be frequently inspected by the master or overseer to see that all is right within."[119]

Interestingly, not all overseers saw the surveillance of slave dwellings as necessarily right or productive. In 1856, an Alabama overseer published a scathing critique of the belief that the constant observation and inspection of cabins was essential. While noting that domestic scrutiny was necessary when "bad conduct" manifested itself amongst the enslaved people, this overseer declared that, "to make a spy of himself, and to be clandestinely peeping and prowling about negro houses when honest men should be asleep, is, to my mind, a *small* business." The overseer was mostly concerned with how enslaved individuals would receive such meddlesome actions, noting that it would be difficult to make them believe these actions stemmed from anything other than suspicion and/or dishonorable intentions. The overseer's understanding of his surveillance duties indicates that he recognized the right of enslaved people to some privacy in their dwellings. He asserts that enslaved people also believe they held such a right, noting that they "have very keen perceptions of right and wrong" and know that the "constant watching and peeping around their cabins" is wrong.[120]

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[118] Formbook of Samuel P. Collier at Belmead Plantation in 1854, Mss1C6455a1, p. 5, Philip St. George Cocke Papers (Cocke Papers), VHS.
[119] *Advice Among Masters*, 129. Such advice was also put forward in an 1856 publication, which noted that, "It is the duty of the overseer to examine the negro cabins once a week." Ibid., 314.
[120] Ibid., 315.

But this belief was certainly not the norm among readers of prescriptive literature, as represented by the quick and vicious response to the overseer's words. Among responses that made clear the overseer's duty to frequently inspect dwellings without hesitation, one respondent from Alabama directly asked the overseer "if he thinks that the good and law-abiding citizens of Columbus, and other towns or cities, feel their…'keen perceptions of right and wrong' doubted because the city authorities impose a patrol over them *every night*, and *all night*, or do they not regard it as a 'terror to evil doers and a praise (protection) to them that do well[?]'"[121] Surveillance, this respondent argued, was for the good of those surveilled, whether white or black. Still, overwhelmingly patrols were to maintain peace and protection for *white* citizens through the observation and punishment of *black* individuals. The privacy of black homes was to be sacrificed for the protection of white homes.

Regardless of how much a planter emphasized the surveillance requirements of his overseer, duty did not always lead to action. Cocke demanded that his overseers record their surveilling, what they found, and any disciplinary action to be taken in response. In the first edition formbook, used in 1854 at the Belmead plantation by the overseer Samuel P. Collier, a sample inscription showed how detailed yet concise each weekly notation should be: "SUNDAY. – Inspected quarters as usual this morning at 9 o'clock. Houses and yards in clean and good order, except Sam's house. Sam and his wife have no sufficient excuse, and will be punished if they do not hereafter keep their house in better order."[122] Yet it appears that Cocke's overseers did not follow his directions. Based on surviving formbooks, no overseer employed by Cocke made such

[121] Ibid., 316.
[122] Formbook of Samuel P. Collier at Belmead Plantation in 1854, Mss1C6455a1, p. 3, Cocke Papers, VHS.

lengthy notes about cabins. In fact, it is doubtful that overseers actually maintained the weekly inspection of cabins. From the three formbooks of two different overseers employed on two of Cocke's Powhatan County, Virginia, plantations from 1854 to 1863, one recorded consistency to the point of doubt.[123] Samuel Collier, this time overseeing Cocke's Beldale plantation in 1863, recorded the same phrase every week, with little to no variation. Perhaps the cabins were indeed "in good order" every single Sunday; or perhaps the overseer simply recorded this trite phrase without inspecting the cabins, just in case Philip St. George Cocke desired to see the formbook. Another formbook, recorded by John T. Talbot at the Belmead plantation in 1861, does not display consistent records. This could be a product of laziness on Talbot's part of either inspecting quarters or recording it. When he does record inspections, it is always the same or a variation on the phrase "hands and houses in good order."[124] It seems likely, then, that at least for enslaved people on the Belmead plantation in 1861, under the supervision of overseer John W. Talbot, their houses were not consistently inspected. And this inconsistency likely applied to many more enslaved people on plantations with overseers, particularly those like Cocke who were especially devoted to slave quarter inspections.[125]

Inspections were not only to occur at regular but also sporadic intervals. The thirteenth duty for Cocke's overseers under the "PLANTATION MANAGEMENT. POLICE" was to "frequently, but at irregular and unexpected hours of the night, visit the

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[123] Formbook of Samuel P. Collier at Beldale Plantation in 1863, Mss1C6455a3, Cocke Papers, VHS.
[124] Formbook of John W. Talbot at Belmead Plantation in 1861, Mss1C6455a2, Cocke Papers, VHS.
[125] Additionally, Roderick McDonald notes that, at least on the plantations he studied in Louisiana and Jamaica, intrusion into slave dwellings rarely took place. While the estates had "house-search policies," they rarely used them except in emergencies. McDonald, *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves,* 148.

quarters and see that all are present, or punish absentees."[126] The surveillance duties of overseers were not simply to ensure tidiness in dwellings, then, but also to anticipate or investigate misbehavior. Numerous slave narratives recall moments when overseers entered slave houses looking for stolen goods, runaways, or incendiary materials.[127] Francis Fedric described how an overseer from a nearby plantation searched the cabins on his owner's plantation when two pigs went missing. The overseer, who "was ordered to search the cottages," examined "diligently all the nooks and corners of the cabin, even having opened the bed."[128] This kind of surveilling connected the duties of overseers with that of patrols. In fact, Philip St. George Cocke made such a connection explicit, noting in the next and fourteenth "POLICE" duty that, "Each manager will do well to organize in his neighborhood, whenever practicable, patrol parties, in order to detect and punish irregularities of the negroes, which are generally committed at night." But Cocke made an important distinction between the overseer and the patrols. When the owner was gone (Cocke owned a number of plantations and thus was often absent), the overseer had control and power over who entered and exited the plantation. This extended to the oversight of when and how patrols surveilled the property (including the enslaved laborers) of Cocke. The patrols, according to Cocke, must always be cognizant that they did not have unequivocal rights to patrol his plantation: "lest any patrol party visit his

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[126] Formbook of Samuel P. Collier at Belmead Plantation in 1854, p. 6, Cocke Papers, VHS. Such advice was also put forward in an 1856 publication, which noted that, "after supper is over the overseer should go around the cabins…but this should be done at uncertain hours of the night." *Advice Among Masters*, 314.
[127] Charles Ball recalled a forced participation in the search for stolen cotton, while Harriet Jacobs related a story of two men killed for ham and wine found in their dwelling. Charles Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: 1859); John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Now in England* (London: 1855), 231; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, Mass.: Published for the Author, 1861), 72.
[128] Francis Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America* (London, 1863), 13.

plantation without apprising him of their intention, he will order the negroes to report to him every such visit, and he will promptly, upon receiving such report, join the patrol party and see that they strictly conform to the law whilst on his plantation, and abstain from committing any abuse."[129]

Patrols played an important role in the surveillance of enslaved people, particularly in their dwellings, but Cocke's statement makes clear that their position in this process was not so clear-cut. Patrols have a long history in the New World, originating in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Caribbean and Latin America, and by the late eighteenth century had assumed the shape they would maintain throughout the nineteenth-century US South. Across the region, the composition, responsibilities, and power of patrols differed. In her examination of slave patrols in Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, Sally E. Hadden makes clear that conditions in these three states made patrolling there different from other areas. Patrollers in Virginia and the Carolinas, for example, received compensation, something that was not true in all southern states.[130] Yet there were a number of similarities among patrols in the US South. Patrols were government-sanctioned groups of white men tasked with surveilling the movements, dwellings, and behaviors of black southerners.[131] Patrols were distinct from other surveillance mechanisms, including overseers, police, and slave catchers, in that service was mandatory for white men of a certain age.[132] In this way, it was believed that all

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[129] Formbook of Samuel P. Collier at Belmead Plantation in 1854, p. 6, Cocke Papers, VHS.
[130] Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 40.
[131] Interestingly, in the case of Georgia, patrolling was required for both men and women, although it is unclear if this policy was actually enforced in Georgia. *A Compilation of the Patrol Laws of the State of Georgia, in Conformity with a Resolution of the General Assembly* (Milledgville, GA: S. & F. Grantland, 1818), 5, Early American Imprints, Series 2, no. 44148, America's Historical Imprints.
[132] For more on the differences and similarities between these various groups, see Hadden, chapter 3.

white men, no matter their status, would play a role and thus have a stake in the preservation of peace and slavery.[133]

The major duties of patrols were to monitor and punish. More specifically, patrols were to search slave dwellings and quarters, disperse gatherings of enslaved individuals, and protect white citizens by patrolling county and city roads.[134] These activities happened at both regular and irregular intervals. For instance, on New Year's Day in Mason County, Kentucky, ten white men were chosen to be the local patrol whose "special duty is to go to the negro cabins for the purpose of searching them."[135] This was a method of producing the most surveillance in the shortest amount of time possible. It consolidated the efforts of slaveholders to maintain control over their plantations, while giving white men (many of whom were non-slaveholders) power and authority and thus a place in the slave system. The patrols were led by a "Captain" who would send "the men into the cabins, waiting outside himself at some distance with the horses, the patrol being a mounted body."[136] If enslaved men or women without a pass were found within a cabin, they were removed from the cabin, stripped, and flogged. Most southern states required that enslaved people outside the purview of their owners carry a pass declaring their intended destination and the length of time permissible for their journey.[137] These passes differed greatly from owner to owner, depending in large part on how often they wished to provide passes. The employer of eight enslaved men owned by the Holland family of

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[133] Exactly what class of white men comprised patrols is debated. Some states maintained prerequisites for patrolling. In North Carolina, for example, property ownership was a stipulation for service. Ibid., 72. For those who did not wish to serve, it was also possible, in some states, to pay a fine to avoid duty. See *A Compilation of the Patrol Laws of the State of Georgia,* 6.
[134] Hadden, *Slave Patrols,* 106–14.
[135] Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky,* 29.
[136] Ibid.
[137] For evidence from antebellum southern states requiring passes, see Clayton E. Jewett and John O. Allen, *Slavery in the South: A State-by-State History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004).

Franklin County, Virginia, gave permission for the men to visit their "home" only on August 20, 1839, whereas Larkin Hundley of Essex County, Virginia provided a pass for Ben, his enslaved laborer, to last the entire month of February 1857.[138] Passes were particularly critical from the perspective of white southerners after supposed or real insurrection. William Selwyn Ball, son of a wealthy slave-owning Virginia family, reminisced in the 1920s that after rumors of an imminent slave insurrection in Prince William County, "Prominent citizens established a Patrol, and no negro was allowed to visit around after dark without written permission from the master."[139] Some owners simply did not provide passes in the hopes that their enslaved laborers would not ambulate. Lila Nichols recalled that, "We ain't had no passes ter go nowhar, an' we ain't allowed offe'n de groun's."[140] Of course, not all enslaved people possessed or even needed passes to move freely, taking whatever chance necessary to see their loved ones and escape the confines of slavery. And yet all enslaved people knew the risks they were taking in challenging the containment policies of owners and lawmakers.

White southerners believed slave dwellings were a crucial space for patrols to investigate and forestall insurrection. In times of real or imagined insurrection, all pretension to black privacy was abandoned. After white citizens of Westmoreland County, Virginia, caught wind in 1809 that a "massacre of ourselves and of those most dear to us was intended by the negroes," the local militia Captain sent out order for patrollers to "search every negro cabin." Captain Gerard McKenney, who gave the

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[138] Pass, Number 7, Holland Family Papers, VHS; Pass, Number 20, Section 4, Hundley Family Papers, VHS. The eight men owned by the Holland family were in the employ of Lewis and Shrewsbury, Kanawha Salines, in Kanawha County (now Malden, West Virginia).
[139] William Selwyn Ball, *Reminiscences of an Old Rebel* (c. 1920s), 8, VHS.
[140] Lila Nichols, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. XI, pt. 2, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 149.

command to search all cabins, claimed executive authority to override any opposition to the entry of any and all white men into black spaces. In this case, the "defense of themselves & the community" took supreme importance. Indeed, it was the patrollers' responsibility to protect "the welfare of the state" by invading enslaved homes.[141] Duty, honor, and the welfare of white citizens became associated with denying privacy to black homes.

Patrols also were to inspect slave dwellings for weapons and other incendiary goods that might be used against white citizens. M. L. Latta remembered that patrollers in his neighborhood "would go to the [slave] houses once a week, and if they found anything in them, they would whip the father, and if they thought the others were not telling the truth, they would whip them also."[142] Edward Cantwell's 1860 judicial handbook, *The Practice at Law in North Carolina*, declared that, "The patrol shall visit the negro houses in their respective districts as often as may be necessary."[143] Georgia law declared that "patrols shall have full power to search and examine all negro houses for offensive weapons and ammunition, and on finding any," the guilty party would be whipped up to twenty lashes.[144] These patrols had the legal right to enter dwellings at any point, with no warrant and no real justification other than white anxiety about guns in the hands of enslaved people. This directly countered the 4th Amendment, but since enslaved people were not considered citizens, they did not have such rights.[145] White Georgians,

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[141] Petition of Samuel Templeman, December 1809, in *Race, Slavery, and Free Blacks, Series I: Petitions to Southern Legislatures, 1777-1867*, ProQuest History Vault.
[142] M.L. Latta, *The History of My Life and Work* (Raleigh, 1903), 168.
[143] Edward Cantwell, *The Practice at Law in North Carolina* (1860), 105.
[144] *A Compilation of the Patrol Laws of the State of Georgia,* 8.
[145] Georgia's slave patrol laws were created in 1765, and so obviously the 4th Amendment was not on the minds of the lawmakers. Yet the slave patrol laws continued mostly intact, although they were altered in the ensuing years, until at least the 1818 publication in pamphlet form of these laws. Publishing in

however, would sustain their right to privacy in the home, even when associated with potential fugitive slaves. The same law that declared slave homes open to intrusion and inspection declared that if the patrol commander "shall hear of any such being harbored in any dwelling of a white person, the commander shall ask leave of the owner of the said dwelling house, or of some white person then there, to search for, examine and apprehend the said fugitive slave."[146] And while home invasion and whipping was the punishment for incendiary objects found in slave dwellings, the penalty for white individuals harboring fugitive slaves was a small monetary fine. A patrol did not have the authority to enter private white spaces, but, according to this law, black homes were non-autonomous private spaces, and therefore were open to surveillance and intrusion.

But as is the case with so many laws, the on-the-ground reality was different than what was on the books. For one, white homes associated with black misbehavior might be treated more like black homes. In Charleston, South Carolina, patrollers and town guardsmen entered the home of Justice of the Peace Cunnington in 1795 on information that an unlawful gathering of enslaved men and women was happening there. Cunnington attempted to block the men from entering his home, angrily asking, "How dare any man force open the door?" That door was the entry into Cunnington's private space, a space over which he was to have complete authority under the castle doctrine. Cunnington's response indicates that he, as a white man, was supposed to have the right to refuse entry. Yet Cunnington was under suspicion of allowing a party for enslaved people in his home, and this activity threatened the peace of the community as it had the capacity to turn

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pamphlet form was a way to spread these laws to a larger audience, thereby propagating these ideas throughout Georgia.

[146] *A Compilation of the Patrol Laws of the State of Georgia,* 8.

dangerous for white citizens if let out of control. One of the patrollers, McBride, told Cunnington that, as part of the patrol, it was "his duty to prevent such doings." Illegal activities obviously gave officials the right to enter homes, but patrols were specifically meant to patrol blackness, not whiteness, and so the entry of these men into the home of Cunnington was predicated on the presence of a prohibited black activity, which on some level negated Cunnington's right of privacy. Cunnington's shock that "any man force open the door" indicates the widely held belief that white private spaces were generally secure from such intrusions, a belief not applied to black homes.[147]

And yet, enslaved spaces—from dwellings to gardens to quarters—were not open to all. Slave owners believed and acted as though slave dwellings were public and open to them, yet limited the access of others into these domestic spaces. While the dwellings, and bodies, of enslaved people were open to surveillance and intrusion of those with authority and permission, they were simultaneously closed or private to others without it. Even though Judge George M. Stroud proclaimed that, "the power of the master over the slave may be exercised…by any one whom he may depute as his agent," owners themselves did not transfer all their power to their overseers. [148] Even though owners and overseers shared white skin, they did not share the same status on the plantation. As *pater familias*, the owner was to have complete control over his dependents, including those he hired. Overseers, therefore, did not possess the same unfettered access to the homes and lives of enslaved people. Likewise, patrols did not have authority to enter black private

[147] Governor's messages to the South Carolina General Assembly, no. 650, A. Vanderhorst, enclosed affidavit of Peter Ryan, November 7, 1795, S.C. General Assembly papers, SCDAH, quoted in Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 130.
[148] Stroud, *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery,* 25.

spaces or even the larger plantation without the permissions of owners, regardless of what state laws said.

So even though states like North Carolina gave patrols "full power to search and examine all negro houses," this right was not recognized by many slave owners, who believed their right to property trumped that of the patrollers.[149] The right to property prompted many to provide their enslaved laborers with limited safety from unauthorized white persons. Tim, a formerly enslaved man from Virginia, remembered that his "owners wouln' 'low de Patterolas to tech [touch] their folks."[150] Claiborne Moss recalled a similar situation on a plantation in Washington County, Georgia: "I seen patrollers.…Our folks didn't care nothin' about 'em….The couldn't whip nobody on my master's plantation….Nobody run them peoples' plantations but theirselves."[151] Even though patrols were commissioned to keep peace and provide protection for white citizens, they never held absolute authority over the property of others, especially when it was physically on another's private property. On the plantation she worked, Lucinda Miller recalled that the "Patrollers did not bother any of the four or five slave families on the Alexander place…they could not even come on the other plantation unless they had permission."[152] Miller went on to note that her owner, Mat Alexander, believed he was the only patrol that his plantation and his laborers needed. Owners, like overseers and patrols, might investigate crimes within dwellings, but unlike overseers and patrols, their

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[149] Sally Hadden only briefly discusses this point in her comprehensive study of slave patrols in late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century Virginia and the Carolinas. Hadden, *Slave Patrols,* esp. 69, 129–32.
[150] Ruby Lorraine Radford, "Slavery by Ruby Lorraine Radford; Compilation made from interviews with 30 slaves and information from slavery laws and old newspaper files," (1937) in *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Georgia Narratives*, vol. IV, pt. 4, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 336.
[151] Claiborne Moss, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Arkansas Narratives*, vol. II, pt. 5, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 160.
[152] Miller, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, 192.

entrance was not based on another's permission or the presumption of some crime.[153] The only person with rights to decide what was to be done with his property on his own private property was Alexander.

If white persons were to enter enslaved spaces, they needed permission from slaveholders or authority based on extreme circumstances, like crime or insurrection. Officially, since patrols were not required to obtain or present warrants like other government officials, they could, and in some documented cases did, enter white homes after being denied access, such as with Justice of the Peace Cunnington. From the perspective of what was on the books, the law was on the side of patrollers, who could decide whether or not to heed the wishes of owners. Naturally, not all slave owners impeded the activities of patrollers on their property. Perhaps because of disinterest, laziness, or a belief in the effectiveness of patrols, some owners openly supported the activities of patrollers, allowing them to move and punish freely. Yet it is clear that many felt such interference had the potential for more harm than good. Part of an owner's paternalistic ideology centered on his honor, which demanded that he, not any governmental organization, maintain control within his household.[154] Thus it would not be appropriate for government groups like patrols to enter, discipline, and potentially damage a slaveholder's property.[155] As Green Willbanks recalled, "Paterollers never

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[153] Narratives recount owners, as well as patrols and overseers, entering slave dwellings to investigate and often punish crimes. See Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup* (Auburn, NY: Derby and Miller, 1853), 233.

[154] While it contains some highly debated interpretations, the most comprehensive study of southern honor remains Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[155] Property rights allowed for owners to seek restitution when patrols committed unauthorized acts of violence and destruction. Sally Hadden provides an example of an owner seeking restitution after patrols snuck onto his farm in Warren County, North Carolina, and beat up an enslaved laborer. Hadden, *Slave Patrols,* 131.

came on Old Boss' place unless he sont [sic.] for them, otherwise they knowed to stay off."[156] Indeed, many owners successfully barred patrols from entering their homes and those of their enslaved laborers. North Carolina made clear in the 1845 case *State v. Hailey* that an owner had the right to resist the intrusion of patrols into slave dwellings. In particular, the decision stated that a majority of assigned patrollers for each county must confer before enacting searches or seizures. Having only a minority would be as if "every man's property…[was] subject to the uncontrolled judgment or passion of a single individual." This, the court declared, was not the intention of patrolling.[157] No single individual, except the owner of the property, had the "uncontrolled judgment" of said property, including slave dwellings.

Exactly who had open access to slave dwellings, then, was not solely based on race. White skin would not give one authority to enter any cabin; that was also the case for black individuals. Even those with the same owner were not to invade the domestic spaces of other enslaved laborers. Jane B. Smith of Giles County, Tennessee, petitioned a local court in 1860 for the right to sell "a slave named Jim" because, among other offenses, he often acted on his "amorous propensities" by breaking into slave cabins to take advantage of enslaved women. Smith's motivation in bringing this suit, she claimed, was to stop these "disturbances in the negro families," thereby providing some element of protection for the women and privacy for the families within their dwellings.[158] It is

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[156] Green Willbanks, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *George Narratives*, vol. IV, pt. 4, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 143.
[157] *State v. Hailey* (1845), in James Iredell, *Reports of Cases at Law Argued and Determined at in the Supreme Court of North Carolina, from December Term, 1845 to June Term, 1846*, vol. 6 (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, reprinted 1892), 13–15, quote from 14.
[158] Petition-Slave Sale Case (Accession #21486001), Giles County, Tennessee, January 25, 1860–September 11, 1860, in *Race, Slavery, and Free Blacks, Series II: Petitions to Southern County Courts*, Part E: Arkansas (1824-1867), Missouri (1806-1860), Tennessee (1791-1867), and Texas (1832-1867), ProQuest History Vault.

likely that other incentives pressed Smith to bring suit, including the financial toll that Jim's insubordination and thievery likely caused her, but she believed (or at least wished others to believe) that she provided protection for her enslaved property against those who intruded their space and bodies without authorization.[159] But Smith and other slave others provided only nominal protection to their enslaved people. Enslaved women and men likely believed that the constant potential and reality of intrusion into and surveillance of slave dwellings by owners and overseers overrode any small safety they provided. While it was possible for patrollers to, as Lewis Clarke described it, come "creeping into slave cabins…drive out husbands from their own beds, and then take their places," it was just as likely (if not more) that an owner would do the exact same thing.[160]

The non-autonomous nature of slave dwellings is an important dimension in the racialization of black homes during the early Republic and antebellum era. White Americans generally considered the privacy of black homes dangerous or implausible, yet the reasons as to why and how white southerners regarded enslaved dwellings as part public and part private were particular to the South. Black dwellings, particularly slave dwellings, could house nefarious activities and objects that might challenge or even

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[159] Slave owners believed that their property rights—over black bodies and private spaces—gave them authority to determine exactly who could enter those spaces and when. Thus the non-autonomous nature of slave dwellings, the fact that black private spaces were open to some and closed to others, was justified in large part through property rights. Although this greatly limited the real privacy that enslaved people experienced in their homes, it did provide a semblance of protection from certain individuals, including patrollers. Scholars have long recognized that the majority of slave owners felt little compulsion to cooperate with patrols and other governmental controls of enslaved people. Most have pointed to economic necessity and laxity as the driving forces, and certainly these were both a part of the decision in many cases. See James Howard Brewer, "Legislation Designed to Control Slavery in Wilmington and Fayetteville," *North Carolina Historical Review* 30, no. 2 (April 1953): 162. Yet this perspective ignores how property rights, as well as paternalistic motivations, compelled owners to provide slave homes some semblance of protection and privacy from certain individuals at particular times, even as owners considered these spaces open to their own bodies and whims.

[160] Lewis Garrard Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke* (Boston, Mass.: David H. Ela, 1845), 79.

destroy slavery and the racial system that undergirded it. Allowing privacy and security within those spaces was potentially detrimental to white mastery, and thus these black dwellings could not be allowed protection, privacy, and (in some cases) comfort. These rights of home were reserved for white families, guarded as they were by legal and cultural proclamations of their rights to privacy and security. And they increasingly sought to physically craft privacy into their homes, guided by popular architects of the era. The Georgian planter Charles Crawford's library, for example, included architectural design books, like Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences: or, a Series of Designs for Cottages and Cottage-Villas* and Gervase Wheeler's *Homes for the People*. The latter title included thirty-seven references to the "private" nature of the house plans.[161] This was not a particularly southern objective, as domestic privacy became increasingly important to Americans in the nineteenth century, in part due to racial, ethnic, and class tensions.[162] Yet slavery and its racial system intensified white southerners' desire for privacy. Even though many male and female slave owners expressed an aversion towards the presence of their enslaved laborers, slavery required black bodies to move through white private spaces. Such inclusion of black bodies in private spaces made those within those spaces vulnerable to mental and social

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[161] Charles P. Crawford, Charles P. Crawford notebook, HL. Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences: or, a Series of Designs for Cottages and Cottage-Villas, and their Gardens and Grounds, Adapted to North America* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1842); Gervase Wheeler, *Homes for the People, in Suburb and Country; The Villa, the Mansion, and the Cottage, Adapted to American Climate and Wants. With Examples Showing How to Alter and Remodel Old Buildings* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1855).

[162] A similar conversation was occurring in New England, where in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-centuries wealthy families seeking to project their refinement expanded the formal areas of the home while removing labor away from them. See Marla R. Miller, "Labor and Liberty in the Age of Refinement: Gender, Class, and the Built Environment," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 10 (January 2005): 15–31.

degradation or even violence.[163] Their decisions about how to incorporate black bodies and labor into white private spaces depended on the size and location of the plantation, class status, and cultural beliefs—including popular aesthetic preferences and contemporary perceptions of race. Yet just because black bodies moved through white spaces did not signify that white homes were non-autonomous private spaces, for the right of privacy did not equate to complete seclusion from those deemed distasteful. White individuals dictated when, where, and who their privacy included.[164] Not all white individuals could act in the denial of privacy and security to the enslaved. Only owners could truly decide who entered and surveilled their property. Black homes were not recognized to be private spaces where the inhabitants had authority. White southerners considered such rights of home as applicable only to free, and thus white, people.

Slave owners constructed a racialized ideology of home that they embedded into their plantation landscapes. Even as slave owners attempted to control who could claim the rights of home, enslaved people created different ways of ensuring some level of secrecy and safety in their homes. Indeed, even as their rights of home were denied, even as the potential for surveillance, intrusion, and familial separation was always present, they built

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[163] Terrence Epperson notes that the incorporation of domestic slaves into the private spaces of white families reflects the constant tension between incorporation and exclusion. Epperson, "Constructing Difference: The Social and Spatial Order of the Chesapeake Plantation," in *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African American Life*, ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 168–69. An interesting comparison can be seen in the homes of slaveholding Brazilians, who were vulnerable to the disorder brought inside by enslaved domestic workers. See Sandra L. Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

[164] This extended even beyond the home, as historian Maurie McInnis has described, to the privatization and restriction of certain spaces for elite whites only, creating what she calls a "closed" architecture. Maurie McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 19.

homes in which they instilled real meaning and import. As Terrence Epperson has noted, the architecture, landscape, and objects of the plantation did not simply exude the preference of owners; they exhibited "tensions, ambiguities, and contested meanings."[165] The dual desires of slaveholders to both include and exclude black bodies and private spaces meant that no concrete ideology ruled the landscape. Plantation landscapes helped create racial difference and limit the possibilities for privacy, but would also give enslaved people space to find secrecy.

[165] Epperson, "Constructing Difference: The Social and Spatial Order of the Chesapeake Plantation," 172.

CHAPTER TWO

"With None to Disturb and Oppress Them":
Privacy and Protection in Slave Dwellings

What was it like, two enslaved men asked of Solomon Northup, to feel safe in one's dwelling? What was it like to be black and feel domestic security and privacy, to "have homes and families of their own, with none to disturb and oppress them"? Northup did not relate his answer to the reader, instead reporting that such aspirations by enslaved individuals for domestic protection "would have brought down the lash upon our backs."[166] Having experienced both freedom and slavery, Northup knew that each granted individuals and families very different levels of privacy.[167] While the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and longstanding harassment fostered a growing sense of domestic unease, black men and women in the North retained legal protections impossible for enslaved people. After being kidnapped and sold, Northup—a free-born black man—endured a vastly different kind of home life, one where surveillance and intrusion was the norm, where privacy and protection was for freed people only. Even within the constraints of slavery, enslaved women and men found some secrecy by employing a set of complex tactics, while simultaneously understanding that true privacy and protection were impossible.

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[166] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup* (Auburn, NY: Derby and Miller, 1853), 49.

[167] As is more fully explained in the introduction, privacy is a twentieth-century legal term denoting the right to be left alone. Yet this twentieth-century legal term evolved from nineteenth-century conceptualizations. Strict constructionists emphasize that those who framed the nation's founding documents never used the term "right to privacy" or even the word "privacy." This conservative approach does not take into account how the core meaning of privacy—to be let alone—has a long, complex cultural history that predates, extends, and informs the legal understanding.

Enslaved Americans built a complex ideology of home that reflected both their desire to be left alone from unwanted intrusion and the realization that autonomous private spaces were impossible under slavery. They manifested this ideology in their dwellings, as enslaved women and men physically built semi-private spaces to provide some secrecy under the constraints of slavery. While the term "private" appears rarely in formerly enslaved testimonies, these sources do reveal that the enslaved recognized the impossibility of privacy in slave homes while still seeking forms of secrecy to create spaces outside their owners' purview. By building mitigated forms of privacy, protection, and comfort into their domestic spaces, enslaved people countered the racialized ideology of home apparent in the southern plantation landscape. Denied the right to privacy in their bodies and domestic areas, enslaved women and men used their dwellings to build secret spaces into their lives, allowing them a modicum of relief from the gaze and intrusion of white bodies into black spaces. Enslaved individuals believed they could and should have their own self-governed spaces, however small, that were not open to an owner. The magnitude of this belief varied; some enslaved individuals expressed a belief that they deserved to keep locked trunks or covered underground pits, others that their entire dwellings should be blocked from prying eyes and hands. This spectrum from secrecy to privacy characterized a developing understanding of home parallel yet distinct from white southerners. While enslaved men and women could not claim and defend privacy in their homes, they did claim and defend their right to create secret spaces. Enslaved individuals of varying positions and statuses sought to escape white surveillance, intrusion, and containment—in other words, sought to escape the racialized ideology of home—by building and maintaining aspects of life outside white purview.

These understandings of rights were not yet codified, but they shaped the antebellum meaning of freedom and slavery in the US South.

While in many ways it was true that, in the words of historian Martha A. Ackelsberg, "to be chattel…means to have no private life," enslaved people desired and constructed semi-private, or at least secret, spaces.[168] Scholarship on the "private" in the lives of the enslaved most often examines the body, arguing that slave owners nullified claims of bodily privacy advanced by enslaved men and especially enslaved women by asserting their ownership of the entirety of an enslaved person.[169] But, as historian Stephanie Camp has shown, the body was both private and public, a site of resistance and domination. Camp describes how the enslaved, particularly women, possessed "three bodies": the first was a site of domination, the body upon which owners enacted their control and power; the second was the body through which the enslaved experienced slavery, its potential and real miseries; the third was a site of resistance and pleasure, one of the many contested terrains between slaver and enslaved.[170] Slave dwellings, too, possessed such multi-faceted meanings, being non-autonomous, public and private, open and closed. As explored in the previous chapter, slave owners regarded slave dwellings as their private spaces. The private nature of the slave dwelling was reserved only for the owner, who denied the rights of home—including security and privacy—to the enslaved individuals who inhabited the space. Slave spaces were to be open at all times to the

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[168] Martha A. Ackelsberg, *Resisting Citizenship: Feminist Essays on Politics, Community, and Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 84.
[169] See Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[170] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 62–8.

owner or his surrogate and closed to those unauthorized to enter. The owner's racialized ideology of home assumed that the rights of home were guaranteed only to white families, and thus enslaved women and men were not to have control over or autonomy in their dwellings. Yet, like one's body, one's dwelling served as a space in which domination and resistance co-existed. Scholars of space most often look to communal spaces such as yards, quarters, or the woods that functioned as spaces of negotiation for greater privileges and autonomy.[171] While much of life happened in the gardens, yards, quarters, fields, and woods, much also happened within dwellings, making them essential for understanding the process of constructing and negotiating small freedoms for the enslaved.[172]

Dwellings contained various "secret" spaces, ranging in size and construction, and enslaved individuals held different expectations for what each could accomplish. Privacy was an ideal that could not be attained under the constraints of slavery, while secrecy was a possibility for what these spaces could offer. Still, enslaved people recognized the value in aspiring towards privacy, or the right to be let alone, as part of their aspirations of freedom. Many factors made their conception of private spaces distinct from what they

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[171] See Anthony Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); William Tynes Cowa, *The Slave in the Swamp: Disrupting the Plantation Narrative* (New York: Routledge, 2005). Perhaps the most well-known study of the uses of concealed places for slave worship is Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), which John B. Boles vigorously challenged in his review of the book, published in the *William and Mary Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (July 1979): 495–96.

[172] Before the turn to capitalism that has seemingly taken over the study of slavery, much of the scholarship on slavery in the past decade shifted our focus away from imposing structures and the dichotomy of complete autonomy or hegemony, and towards the more subtle and complex process by which enslaved people adjusted the balance of power under slavery. This has been fruitful for many reasons, including that it takes into account the pervasive desire for and actions taken by enslaved people for better lives and for freedom, alongside the very real constraints within which they lived. That enslaved individuals acted politically is now an accepted truth, and their political struggles were a part of the negotiation and (attempted) adjustment of power even under extremely difficult circumstances. I seek to build upon this previous scholarship by analyzing privacy as a negotiation between black and white.

saw in white homes. For one, the physical slave dwelling was only part of the larger "home" for enslaved people, which often included gardens, yards, quarters, broader plantation, city roads, and other spaces adjacent to the dwelling. Second, they often understood themselves as part of a community and kinship network rather than only as separate individuals or nuclear families.[173] Third, many enslaved laborers lived in small dwellings with large numbers of inhabitants, including non-family members. While it is impossible to assess the percentage of those who lived in single-family dwellings, few extant sources point to this as commonplace. Fourth, varied African understandings of home and privacy endured.[174] Fifth, enslaved people did not legally own their dwellings, although it appears they often harbored a sense of possession toward "their" dwelling.[175] Lastly, the potential and reality of surveillance, intrusion, and violence shaped how

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[173] The scholarship on this is vast and spans the Atlantic World, but in the United States extends from many of the studies of the 1970s, including Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); and John Blassingame, *Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). For the Atlantic context, see James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[174] Architectural designs rooted in or influenced by African models are not commonly seen in extant slave dwellings, but they are powerful reminders of the continued importance of African aesthetics. For more about the African influence on African American architecture, see the work of John Michael Vlach, including *Behind the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); and, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), chapter 8. The same was likely true of corresponding African conceptions of home and privacy, but diversity and distance makes it difficult to parse it out. Merrick Posnansky has urged scholars to be more aware of the wide range of aesthetics and cultures of Africa when trying to discern African retentions in African American culture. Merrick Posnansky, "West African Reflections on African-American Archaeology," in *I, Too, Am America: Archaeological Studies of African American Life*, ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 21–38.

[175] Much like enslaved individuals were understood, by at least the 1830s, as not owning their own labor or bodies, they did not own the other "property" technically owned by their owners, including their dwelling. They did, however, feel a sense of possession over their labor, bodies, and (I argue) their dwellings. This was different from ownership; it was not legally binding, could easily be revoked by slave owners, and did not include the same rights to property that ownership did (including the right to privacy). Yet it gave enslaved people some responsibility for and semblance of control over their dwellings, and enabled them to negotiate for privileges that were supposed to be denied them, including that of privacy. For more on kinship ties and informal property ownership, see Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

enslaved people experienced and understood home and privacy. Protection from the gaze and entry of malicious individuals was an important and desired element of home. Of course, protection was important for other Americans who were simultaneously defining their own version of privacy. But enslaved people's desire for protection of home was distinct. Privacy seemed to promise protection for family, protection that slavery never allowed. Spaces of secrecy allowed for a modicum of privacy and protection, even if the reality of the slave dwelling did not live up to the desires of enslaved people.

The cultural and legal concepts of privacy and home, then, were not simply defined by white southerners. Enslaved people actively contributed their own understandings of these concepts. Privacy was a negotiation among disparate peoples, and enslaved individuals contended with slave owners' ideology of privacy as they constructed their own. Sources as diverse as legal declarations, antebellum novels, city ordinances, agricultural journals, and plantation record books argued that enslaved individuals had no right to privacy. Some enslaved individuals may have assumed a privilege of privacy in their dwellings simply because of the circumstances under which they lived, particularly if their owner, overseer, or patrols rarely, if ever, entered their domestic spaces. Yet it was true that enslaved people did not have a legal right to privacy.[176] As property, they had rights to little. Josiah Henson claimed that he and the other enslaved laborers of his owner, Isaac Riley of Montgomery County, Maryland, "had no security for personal rights."[177] They were subsumed under the authority of the

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[176] No American had a legal right to privacy at this time, as there was no such documented right in local, state, or federal law until the late nineteenth century. However, citizens could claim redress for violations of their 4th Amendment rights, something that enslaved men and women, as non-citizens, could not claim. Similarly, the cultural understanding of privacy—of home as a man's castle—made privacy for white citizens a *de facto* reality.

[177] Josiah Henson, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life. An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson* (London: Christian Age Office, 1876), 21.

pater familias, who had the power to invade, destroy, or protect slave dwellings and those within them. Slaveholders' racialized ideology of privacy gave them access to both homes and bodies, making no space truly private within the institution of slavery.

Slave dwellings, then, were in many ways analogous to jail cells.[178] Many former slaves turned abolitionists and writers used this analogy in their narratives. William Wells Brown called slavery a "prison-house," and described the houses for enslaved people as "a kind of domestic jail."[179] John Brown described his slave house as an "uncomfortable, prison-looking sort of place," while Charles Ball called his dwelling "my prison-house."[180] Those with the "keys" could intrude at any moment. Additionally, enslaved individuals, like prison inmates, were under the watchful eye of an authority who told them when they could and could not leave, who could and could not enter.

Surveillance and the encroachment into many areas of enslaved people's lives, including in workplaces and dwellings, was inconvenient, intimidating, and sometimes

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[178] This characterization—that slave dwellings were jail cells—built on the trope of slavery as a prison. J. C. Hathaway prefaced the 1847 narrative of William Wells Brown by describing Brown's voice as emanating "from the prison-house." William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave* (Boston, Mass.: The Anti-slavery Office, 1847), vii. George L. Ruffin prefaced the 1881 narrative of Frederick Douglass by characterizing Douglass's escape from slavery as having "escaped from the prison-house." Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing Co., 1881), ix. This trope is common in the writings of white abolitionists as well. An 1835 collection of juvenile anti-slavery poems includes a reference to "the wiry prison" and "sad prison-house" of slavery. "Little Bird's Complaint," in *Juvenile Poems, for the Use of Free American Children of Every Complexion* (Boston: Garrison & Knapp, 1835), verso cover, American Antiquarian Society. This continued after the legal end of slavery. A short article in the December 1865 edition of the *Freedmen's Record*, a publication of the New-England Freedmen's Aid Society, described the return of Harriet Jacobs to her former home in Edenton, North Carolina, where she looked upon "her old prison-house." "A Milestone of Progress," *Freedmen's Record* 1, no. 12 (December 1865), 199, Huntington Library. That same issue contains a poem with the line "Just free from chains and prison-house." Mrs. Pillsbury, "Christmas Poem," *Freedmen's Record* 1, no. 12 (December 1865), 200. The term also used twice in February issue. *Freedmen's Record* 1, no. 2 (February 1865), 21, 23.

[179] William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown,* vii, 52.

[180] John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Now in England* (1855), 127; Charles Ball, *Fifty Years In Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: H. Dayton, 1859), 402.

violent. Working as a domestic in a white home, for instance, meant intense surveillance and scrutiny from the woman of house. Historian Thavolia Glymph examines the relationship between enslaved and white women, especially as it pertained to labor in the household, and determined that mistresses maintained more power in the household hierarchy than previous scholars recognized.[181] These white women had the duty of surveilling the enslaved women and men who worked within the household.[182] This kind of surveillance was intense and personal, as the black women and men worked and sometimes lived under the close observation of white women. Those who labored in fields or in other areas away from the main house might not feel the presence of the woman of the house so often. Octavia Albert's Aunt Sallie recalled that she and her brother "hardly ever saw" their "mistress," since they "lived in quarters and the house was away off."[183] While it is true that surveillance and intrusion was never constant, in nearly all recollections of slavery provided by those formerly enslaved, the gaze and physical presence of white intruders was both very real and very possible. Even though her mistress might rarely appear in or near her dwelling, this did not forestall the surveillance of Sallie, who risked truancy rather than deal with her overseer's consistently hostile behavior. For a young Frederick Douglass, the idea of his owner, whose "name seemed ever to be mentioned with fear and shuddering," was worrisome enough to erode the feeling of security he once felt in his grandmother's cabin.[184] The

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[181] Thavolia Glymph also stresses the resistance techniques of enslaved women within this relationship. Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[182] Northern white women in the Victorian era also felt compelled to surveil servants working in their households. See Anna Vemer Andrzejewski, *Building Power: Architecture and Surveillance in Victorian America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), chapter 3.
[183] Octavia V. Rogers Albert, *The House of Bondage, or, Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1890), 98.
[184] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 39.

malevolent presence of white eyes seemed to follow him everywhere; years later, Douglass lived under the panoptic surveillance regime of Edward Covey.[185]

Whether in urban or rural environs, enslaved individuals lived under the constant potential for home invasion. On the Pine-Top plantation outside of Charleston, South Carolina, where Sam Aleckson lived and labored, enslaved individuals were constantly vigilant about the possibility of intrusion. Aleckson declared that the enslaved "people on Pine Top expected their master at any hour, and were not surprised to have him present himself at their doors when he thought they were not looking for him."[186]Aleckson expressed a sort of pride in this constant vigilance, in always being ready for "master" to show. His narrative, published in 1929, is part of an odd lineage of black memoirs that invoked Lost Cause imagery. Beyond the issue of whether such pride was a show for a white audience or was a deeply held conviction, Aleckson's recognition of the round-the-clock watchfulness required of enslaved people in their homes reveals an acceptance of the non-autonomous nature of slave dwellings. Such intrusion was his owner's right, and thus his enslaved laborers "must appear collected" and ready to accept him into the space when he randomly appeared.[187]

Enslaved people may have tolerated such interference, but they did not welcome it, in large part because they associated the white gaze and intrusion into their dwellings with the loss of family. If, as historian Walter Johnson has estimated, nearly half of all slave sales split up families in the antebellum period, a portion of those separations likely

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[185] For more on Douglass and panoptic surveillance, see chapter 3, "Frederick Douglass on Power Relations and Resistance 'From Below,'" in Cynthia R. Nielsen, *Foucault, Douglass, Fanon, and Scotus in Dialogue: On Social Construction and Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[186] Sam Aleckson, *Before The War, and After the Union: An Autobiography* (Boston: Gold Mind Publishing Company, 1929), 58–59.
[187] Ibid., 59.

commenced or concluded in slave dwellings.[188] Enslaved people narrated a long history of the separation of families in domestic spaces, pinpointing its commencement in Africa when white slave traders, in the words of Frederick Douglass, "left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery."[189] Slavery began with the separation of one's self from one's home.[190] A formerly enslaved man named Aaron asserted this in poetic form: "For once he was free in the land of his birth,/ Till the white man o'er the ocean came sailing;/ And tore him away from his home and his hearth;/ While they turned a deaf ear to his wailing."[191] Familial separation in the domestic sphere continued once in the New World. The visual culture of the anti-slavery movement tended to emphasize the auction block as the space wherein slave families were separated, but antebellum and postbellum narratives of formerly enslaved people related instances of separation within a home.[192] Thomas Jones realized this when he learned that enslaved parents could not protect children in their own home. Sitting with his mother in their small cabin, Jones remembered the moment when, at the behest of their master, the black slave driver Abraham came into their dwelling to separate son from mother forever. Jones was "holding on to my mother's clothes and begging her to

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[188] Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 14.
[189] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Boston, 1845), 40.
[190] Not all African Americans held such uncomplicated views on the pre-slavery situation in Africa. For example, see Daniel Coker, "A Dialogue between a Virginian and an African Minister," (1810) in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest Literature, 1790–1860*, eds. Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York: Routledge, 2001), 53–65.
[191] Aaron, *The Light and Truth of Slavery, Aaron's History* (Worcester, Mass., 1845).
[192] Phillip Lapsansky argues that the image of the separation of slave families was one of three main visual tropes of the anti-slavery movement, but the numerous examples focus on the auction block or other public arena. Phillip Lapsansky "Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 201–30. For other examples of separation within slave homes, see Francis Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America* (London, 1863), 42; and Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., Publishers, 1868), 23.

protect me, and not let the man take me away," but his mother knew she could not protect him, telling him with tears in her eyes, "I can't save you, Tommy; master has sold you, you must go."[193]

Harriet Jacobs would also bemoan that any enslaved mother "knows there is no security for her children," and perhaps more than anyone else, enslaved women knew the impossibility of privacy and protection in one's dwelling.[194] These women experienced little privacy of home or body, both of which were regarded as open to surveillance and intrusion by owners. Henry Bibb described every slaveholder as a "keeper of a house or houses of ill-fame," these houses often being the actual homes of enslaved individuals. Believing these dwellings to be open at any time and for any purpose, slave owners "can and do, enter at night or day the lodging places of slaves; break up the bonds of affection in families; destroy all their domestic and social union for life." Importantly, Bibb noted that this all was legal, since, for enslaved individuals, "the laws of the country afford them no protection."[195] William J. Anderson also emphasized this lack of recourse for invading homes and marriage beds, noting that, "men in different parts of the South…make colored men get out of bed and go home, while they take their place and cohabit with their wives."[196]

No slave narrative better exemplifies the lack of privacy in home and body, and how both could be seized by an owner, than that of Harriet Jacobs. In her early childhood, she had lived a comparatively sheltered life with her parents in a comfortable

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[193] Thomas H. Jones, *Experience and Personal Narrative of Uncle Tom Jones; Who Was for Forty Years a Slave* (Boston: Published by H. B. Skinner, 1854[?]), 9.
[194] Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, Mass.: Published for the Author, 1861), 87.
[195] Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave* (New York: Published by the Author, 1849), 38.
[196] William J. Anderson, *Life and Narrative of William J. Anderson, Twenty-four Years a Slave* (Chicago, Ill.: Daily Tribune Book and Job Printing Office, 1857), 22.

home. The love, joy, and protection of her family, coupled with a comfortable and seemingly safe home, protected Jacobs from the reality of slavery. In looking back, Jacobs reflected that, "I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to them for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment."[197] Her body was not truly her own, much like that comfortable home was not. Formerly enslaved women in Georgia likewise described how "white men went with colored gals and women bold. Any time they saw one and wanted her, she had to go with him, and his wife didn't say nothin' 'bout it."[198] Jacobs recognized this in her owner, who believed it was his right to rape her whenever he pleased. Jacobs asked her reader, presumably a northern woman whose home was protected by the law, "where could I turn for protection?"[199] Of course, a northern woman may have had a protected home, but she too was not protected from the man who claimed her (i.e. her husband). Yet slave owners regarded the slave home, like the slave body, as spaces or objects that could be claimed and torn away at any moment. Especially when offered a quaint and comfortable house, Jacobs knew that this dwelling was not a haven from a heartless world but rather a hellish trap where her owner's gaze and body could enter it and her at will. Jacobs evaded this trap and escaped, spending more than seven years in a cramped attic rather than suffer the continued lack of privacy and protection of her body and home. Indeed, the attic was itself a secret space constructed by the enslaved Jacobs to escape the gaze and intrusion of her owner.

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[197] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 11–12.
[198] Louise Oliphant, "Compilation Richmond County Ex-Slave Narratives: Mistreatment of Slaves," in *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Georgia Narratives*, vol. 4, pt. 4, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 292.
[199] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 45.

The wives of slave owners felt some right to invade slave homes if their husbands had invaded the bodies of enslaved women. Solomon Northup detailed the miserable life of Patsey, a young enslaved woman whose mistress grew jealous after her husband raped Patsey. Beyond the physical penetration and brutality of Edwin Epps, Patsey had to be careful of violent retaliation around her dwelling, for "if she was not watchful when about her cabin, or when walking in the yard, a billet of wood, or a broken bottle perhaps, hurled from her mistress' hand, would smite her unexpectedly in the face."[200] A formerly enslaved woman from Georgia recalled more than half a century after emancipation that, "One white lady that lived near us at McBean slipped in a colored gal's room and cut her baby's head clean off 'cause it belonged to her husband."[201] Even if they did not physically violate enslaved women's domestic space, many female owners (like their male counterparts) required that others frequently surveil houses, making sure that, as William Anderson put it, the "negro cabins [were] well watched."[202]

Surveillance and inspection of dwellings also came from overseers, men hired by owners to oversee the work and conduct of enslaved laborers.[203] Not all enslaved people dealt with overseers; those living in cities, on small farms, or working in a white household may never have come in contact with an overseer. But for those living and laboring under the gaze of these men, who were paid to surveil them, their presence could

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[200] Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave,* 189.
[201] Oliphant, "Compilation Richmond County Ex-Slave Narratives," 295.
[202] Anderson, *Life and Narrative of William J. Anderson*, 29.
[203] The best general study of overseers remains William Kauffman Scarborough, *The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South* (Baton Rouge, 1969). Recent works have examined the relationships between overseers and others on the plantation (enslaved laborers, masters, etc.), as well as revealed how observers crafted images and stereotypes that remain the bulk of our source base on overseers. See William E. Wiethoff, "Enslaved Africans' Rivalry with White Overseers in Plantation Culture: An Unconventional Interpretation," *Journal of Black Studies* 36, no. 3 (Jan., 2006): 429–55; Wiethoff, *Crafting the Overseer's Image* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

be stifling. William Wells Brown described a common plantation layout throughout the South, which positioned slave dwellings within sight and sound of the overseer's house.[204] Overseers with homes at a distance from slave quarters were to frequently visit these spaces, as dictated by plantation rules and regulations. An 1840 article in the *Southern Cultivator and Monthly Journal* detailed the rules of plantations, and supported this unexpected and frequent surveillance of slave dwellings, noting that the overseer should "visit the negro cabins at least once or twice a week, at night, to see that all are in."[205] Though not always given authority to enter slave dwellings, still overseers often acted as surrogates for owners who could access dwellings at will. This could happen at any time, but was most often used as a means of preventing or solving a crime. Overseers searched cabins for unauthorized goods—including guns, books, and writing utensils—and people, especially runaway slaves. The cabin of Octavia Albert's uncle, for example, had been scoured as part of a runaway search, and in it the overseer found books, forged passes, and free papers.[206]

Overseers and owners were not the only intruders enslaved people dealt with, as legal and extralegal patrols roamed streets and invaded homes in the city and countryside. Patrol duties included monitoring city and country roads to ensure that any enslaved person off his or her owner's property had a proper pass. As one formerly enslaved man recalled, "If you didn't have dat pass, de Patterolas would whip you."[207] Patrols were also

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[204] Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown,* 13.
[205] As explored in chapter one, such proscriptions were probably rarely followed, but the infrequency of such visits would make them even more worrisome to enslaved people. Quoted in Ruby Lorraine Radford, "Slavery by Ruby Lorraine Radford; Compilation made from interviews with 30 slaves and information from slavery laws and old newspaper files," in *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Georgia Narratives*, vol. 4, pt. 4, 330.
[206] Albert, *The House of Bondage*, 110.
[207] Radford, "Slavery by Ruby Lorraine Radford," 326.

charged with inspecting plantations, quarters, and dwellings for unauthorized persons. If an enslaved man, living away from his family, was found in his wife's cabin without a proper pass, he would be punished. Henry Waldon remembered that if his mistress's eldest son, Ed Sterling, was out patrolling and caught "a man in bed with his wife at night, he'd whip him and make him go home."[208] Of course, many enslaved people nightly or weekly left their dwellings, as their families lived elsewhere. Mary McCray remembered that many enslaved men walked two and three miles to their "homes" where their families were, and would have to endure great punishment for being away from their slave dwellings late at night.[209] Yet regardless of the punishment, men and women continued to leave their dwellings for a few hours with their families. The fact that formerly enslaved people remembered the restrictions placed on their movement, but also remembered the resistance against it, reveals that the white ideas permeated but did not totally comprise slave understandings of their rights within and without the home. Although these slave patrols were often ineffective, serving as social gatherings as much as surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms, their existence and brutal tactics instilled fear in the minds of many enslaved people. W. L. Bost, who was enslaved on a plantation near Newton, North Carolina, remembered the anxiety caused by patrollers: "the paddyrollers they keep close watch on the pore niggers so they have no chance to do anything or go anywhere. They jes' like policemen, only worser."[210] Indeed, unlike

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[208] Henry Waldon, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Arkansas Narratives*, vol. 2, pt. 7, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 16.
[209] S. J. McCray, *Life of Mary F. McCray: Born and Raised a Slave in the State of Kentucky* (Lima, Ohio: 1898), 12.
[210] W. L. Bost, *WPA Slave Narrative Project, North Carolina Narratives*, vol. 11, pt. 1, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 141. Perhaps unintentionally, Bost's comment that patrols surveilled "pore niggers" indicates that patrols watched the movement and activities of all black southerners. While they typically focused their gaze on enslaved individuals and spaces, the association of black skin with slavery meant that many free black southerners and their homes were also wrapped up in

policemen, patrols were not required to have warrants to enter black dwellings, and thus could intrude upon domestic spaces with little more than their city, county, or state appointment as justification.

Yet even as patrols received the legal backing of local government to enter slave dwellings at any time, the reality was more complicated. Slave owners could and very often did block the movement of patrols and other unauthorized white southerners onto their land and into their slave dwellings. By the early 1830s, southern society insisted that the right of property should be a protected and supported right of citizens.[211] As enslaved people and their dwellings were the property of owners, it was therefore the right of owners to decide how the property would be treated, including who and when individuals entered those spaces. An owner, then, had the right to bar entry to patrols, even though that right was guaranteed by most southern states. Many owners made this choice at some point, wanting to protect their property from any damage. Charlie Grant remembered that his owner, "Old man Gibson," told patrollers that "dey got no right" to enter his estate and injure his property.[212] This desire stemmed in large part from the economic incentive to keep laborers healthy, but also from a belief in their own paternalism. This combination of property rights and paternalism, along with their belief in their own

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the patrol surveillance system. Sally Hadden maintains the free black homes were most often targeted when suspected of holding runaways or offering illicit goods like alcohol to enslaved individuals. Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 115, 123.

[211] Laura Edwards traces the mutually beneficial rise of state law and patriarchal property rights in the Carolinas, so that by the 1830s the abstract and socially accepted belief of a white man's complete control over the bodies and labor of dependents was codified into law. Laura F. Edwards, *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[212] Charlie Grant, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *South Carolina Narratives*, vol. 14, pt. 2, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 175.

privacy rights, prompted owners to provide limited protection to their enslaved laborers.[213]

Even as enslaved people conceded privacy was impossible in their dwellings, many also recognized that an owner's limited paternalist protection could provide them room to negotiate for some security and secrecy. Owners could enter dwellings at any moment, yet they could also afford some protection from other malicious individuals. This protection was, of course, limited. Not all owners felt the combined motivations of property rights, paternalism, and economic incentive to keep other white persons out of slave dwellings. Elige Davison from Richmond, Virginia recalled how patrollers once entered his dwelling after a long day in the fields to check (with a whip) whether he was asleep and too tired to run away.[214] For those who had the opportunity, they could use their owner's limited protection to keep their homes and selves safe. Bernice Bowden recalled how men and women would assert to patrollers, "I'm at home now, don't you come in here."[215]

Demanding this protection only worked if patrollers believed that owners endorsed this same position. In this way, any limited privacy and protection of black homes required the paternalism of an owner or a white guardian. Harriet Jacobs believed that it was only through her family's relationship with influential white townspeople in

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[213] The issue of the protection of slave property was not only about the physical protection of enslaved property. It also increasingly revolved around the protection of a man's right to hold another man as property, and all the attendant rights involved with that. For instance, the protection of slave property in new states and territories was a major point of debate in the antebellum period. See, for instance, Albert Gallatin Brown, *Protection to Slave Property: Speech of Hon. A. G. Brown, of Mississippi, in Defence of His Proposition for Immediate Congressional Protection to Slave Property in the Territories, with the Reply of Senator Fitch* (Washington: 1860), Huntington Library.

[214] Elige Davison, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Texas Narratives*, vol. 16, pt. 1, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 299.

[215] Bernice Bowden, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Arkansas Narratives*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 163.

Edenton, North Carolina, that her grandmother's home was spared significant destruction during the post-Nat Turner patrol raids. If they had not been "in the midst of white families who would protect" them, Jacobs argued, her family would have been subject to the deceitful tactics of patrollers.[216] This did not always stop patrols, who might conjure up, in the words of Lewis Clarke, "all sorts of pretences, false as their lying tongues can make them" to invade black dwellings and punish those within.[217]

And yet the limited protection of black homes in the South was not simply a product of white benevolence. Free black individuals believed they had a right to privacy in their homes guaranteed by their freedom. If, as noted before, one of the lines separating slavery and freedom was that slavery (by definition) negated the possibility of claiming privacy, then free black individuals used their status to argue for their right to claim and defend privacy. Whether or not they possessed paternalistic protection like Jacobs's grandmother, free black southerners in many ways demanded their privacy rights. Francis Henderson, a formerly enslaved woman, told of a free man of color who, after denying patrollers entry to his house, received their wrath. On the presumption of looking for the man's wife who lived on a nearby plantation, the patrollers broke into the house and nearly beat the man to death. In this case, Henderson noted, the man had no legal recourse; "All the redress he got was, that he had no right to resist a white man."[218] Similarly, in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, John Sandy, a free man of color, petitioned that a white man cease disturbing his private property. Charles Barnes, the white man in the case, supposedly "illegally, forcibly and fraudulently" took possession

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[216] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 99.
[217] Lewis Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1845), 79.
[218] Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery; The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Boston, Mass.: John P. Jewett and Company, 1856), 157–58.

of a large section of Sandy's land. He also began to cut timber on that land, thereby preventing Sandy from pursuing his work cutting cordwood for steamships. Sandy declared that Barnes' disturbance of his land went against his rights as a free man. Sandy presented himself as a respectable member of the community who, "not withstanding your petitioners peaceable and orderly conduct…has not been permitted to enjoy his civil rights secured to him by law."[219] Sandy demanded that Barnes immediately vacate the land and pay him $300 in damages, yet the petition was dismissed on motion of Sandy's counsel. The white man had the authority to enter, steal, and establish himself on the land that a black man considered his own. While the racialized ideology of home might sometimes blur the lines between slavery and freedom, still Sandy's and Henderson's stories demonstrate that these free men of color believed they held the right to privacy on their own land and in their own homes.

Archibald Grimke also recalled how his mother, who had supposedly been freed by her owner and the father to her three sons, once blocked a police officer from setting foot in her home. As the police officer "stepped forward to enter the den, my mother quick as a flash slammed the door in his face and hurled him off the threshold onto the platform." Grimke's mother physically showed a city official that he did not have the right to enter her home without her permission. And this had a lasting effect; Grimke noted that his mother's actions "balked the officer who made no further attempt to enter the house."[220] But Grimke, his brothers, and his mother were only nominally free, promised their liberty by their owner on his deathbed but never officially manumitted.

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[219] Petition of John Sandy, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 17 April 1841, Race, Slavery, and Free Black, Series II: Petitions to Southern County Courts, Part F: Louisiana (1795-1863), History Vault ProQuest.
[220] "Memoirs of Archibald H. Grimke," transcribed by Angelina Weld Grimke, Box 39-2, Folder 47, Archibald H. Grimke Papers, Moorland-Springarn Research Center (MSRC).

The man, Montague, who inherited the Grimke boys and their mother demanded they revoke their nominally free status and return to serve him, which only happened after a police officer invaded their home and dragged Grimke's mother out. Even though she had demanded and received her privacy rights in one case, when she and others assumed her free status, the authority of the slave owner over her home and body dissolved those rights. Thus the case was obviously different for enslaved people. Although free people of color did not consistently maintain rights to protection and privacy in their homes—for instance, with the Fugitive Slave Act—still unlike enslaved individuals, free black southerners could seek legal recompense for the unauthorized intrusion of their homes.

The likelihood of attaining such recourse was small, but not unheard of. In 1791, Angela Barnett—a free woman of color living in Richmond, Virginia—actively defended those in her home from the invasion of two white men who sought to apprehend runaway slaves. In the process, she killed one of these men, and was convicted and sentenced to death for the murder. Yet a year later, after being impregnated by a white man in jail, a group of notable Richmonders (including future Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall) came to her defense, arguing that she should be pardoned since the white men had violated "the great right of personal immunity" that every free person should possess in their "own home."[221] The governor agreed with this argument, pardoning and releasing Barnett.

Enslaved individuals could not access legal avenues that free black southerners could, but they understood the complexities of privacy, secrecy, and protection and

[221] Virginia Executive Papers, Letters Received, Box 81 (petition), Library of Virginia, Richmond. Quoted in James Sidbury, *Ploughshares Into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 178.

sought out opportunities for building elements of these into their homes and lives. A slave owner's ideology of privacy and protection gave enslaved people the opportunity to seek protection from certain individuals, and led them to challenge the supposedly unfettered access of the owner to their dwellings by constructing spaces of secrecy within their homes and lives. Additionally, even though they experienced unease over white intrusion of black homes, the surveillance and intrusion of overseers, patrols, and owners was inconsistent at best. By understanding the complicated reality of their living situation—open at times and protected at others, yet also regularly ignored or forgotten by whites—enslaved individuals built elements of secrecy and security into their lives and homes. Surveillance, intrusion, and violence denied enslaved people privacy, but their construction of moments and elements of protection and secrecy undermined the very system that denied it to them.

Recognizing the desire of owners to protect their property, some enslaved individuals negotiated for a semblance of privacy by requesting a dwelling outside an owner's purview. Living out—the term used to describe living away from an owner's estate—provided greater privacy in the dwellings of urban enslaved people, even if they had to also contend with city restrictions. A common occurrence in the urban South, living out involved enslaved people living in dwellings separate from those of their masters. While many wealthy urban southern homeowners constructed houses with slave quarters, still some permitted their slaves to "live out" by residing in a home outside of the slave owner's domain.[222] Free and enslaved persons often lived near where they labored, congregating, in the case of Mobile, Alabama, in the First Ward near the docks

[222] Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 62.

and cotton processing facilities. But nearly three-fourths of free black Mobilians resided in the Sixth and Seventh Wards at the edges of town, pushed out from the more central city residences many had occupied up until the 1840s.[223] Though an 1837 ordinance passed in Mobile mandated that no slave "shall have, hold, occupy, reside, or sleep in any house, outhouse, building, or enclosure, other than his…owner's," as many as 1,000 of the city's 6,900 slaves continued to "live out" of their owners' purview in 1855.[224]

The passage of an ordinance to eliminate "living out" indicates the anxiety that such a practice stimulated in the white community. What was so unsettling to white citizens about this practice and, as architectural historian John Vlach puts it, the "black urban domain" it created was not simply the disease they assumed spread within these makeshift communities.[225] It was the autonomy that "living out" bred, "the great liberty and freedom of restraint allowed them [slaves]… to rent premises on which to live, where they are entirely free from restraint imposed upon them by the presence of their owners or employers."[226] In other words, living out gave enslaved individuals privacy they could not attain when living under the purview of owners. Yet the continued rejection of ordinances like Mobile's 1837 restriction points to the practicality living out and the real (though limited) power enslaved people had in negotiating their living conditions. On June 22, 1855, Catherine, Harriet, and Julia Myers provided a pass for their enslaved laborers Richard and Narcissa to "remain and reside in the Tenement on College Street" in Richmond, Virginia.[227] By negotiating for permission to live outside the purview of

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[223] Harriet E. Amos, *Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 99–101.
[224] *Mobile Mercantile Advertiser,* July 14, 1837; Amos, *Cotton City*, 89.
[225] John Vlach, "'Without Recourse to Owners': The Architecture of Urban Slavery in the Antebellum South," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 6 (January 1997), 158.
[226] *Mobile Register and Journal,* July 10, 1847.
[227] Pass, Section 14, Myers Family Papers, VHS.

their owners, Richard and Narcissa gained a semblance of privacy by using a pass system meant to maintain their surveillance.

Others brokered moments or spaces undisturbed by the white gaze or presence. After reading through his overseer's self-imposed rules, Waller Holladay wrote a letter on December 31, 1858, suggesting "an alteration in your fifth rule…the examinations of blankets is not necessary, and had better be let alone."[228] Inspection of cabins for cleanliness was necessary, but taking it to the level of examining blankets was too far, Holladay concluded. His enslaved laborers would not appreciate the overseer picking through their material goods on a regular basis, implying that they held some influence over what happened in their dwellings. When their spaces were encroached upon, enslaved individuals sometimes fought back. As an overseer searched a woman's cabin for stolen cotton, demanding that she tell him where she hid the cotton, the woman's father watched the scene from his own doorstep. Even though the man expressed terror at what might happen to his daughter, he still evinced an overt anger at the proceedings, watching the scene "indignant with rage."[229] Others might take action when faced with intrusion and inspection. A popular slave folktale describes how a group of enslaved people resisted the invasion of patrollers who demanded entry into their dwelling. Thinking quickly, one enslaved man threw ashes from the fireplace in the eyes of the patrollers, temporarily blinding them and allowing the enslaved individuals to pass unseen.[230] The more common forms of response to surveillance and intrusion, however,

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[228] Negro Slaves, #2716, Section 57, Holladay Family Papers, VHS.
[229] Ball, *Fifty Years In Chains,* 232.
[230] Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 107. For more on slave folktales about trickery and escape, see Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. 121–33.

were secretive and sometimes delayed. Direct confrontation was particularly dangerous, and other forms of protest could be just as effective.

Experience and observation, for example, gave enslaved individuals opportunities for acting outside the purview of owners or overseers. John Brown memorized the surveillance pattern of his owner's Mississippi plantation, noting when and where white intrusion and surveillance most often occurred. He could take advantage of lapses, noting that he "watched until the negro quarters had been inspected" before slipping away and evading his captors.[231] Areas outside dwellings, including those away from the gaze of owners and overseers, were important for creating secret moments and spaces. For some, the woods were safer for enslaved people than the supposed homes that owners provided them with. Octavia Albert's aunt asserted she had been more content and happy hiding in the woods than in her slave dwelling under the gaze of a violent overseer. She claimed to have "stayed in the woods one half of my time" because she "felt satisfied there."[232] Louise Oliphant interviewed a formerly enslaved individual in Georgia who remembered how the plantation's best field hand, Josh, ran to the woods to escape the gaze and whip of the overseer. He found a rotted tree and later a cave to stay in, rather than endure constant surveillance and probable pain.[233] The surveillance and intrusion of owners, overseers, and patrols was distressing, invasive, and sometimes violent, but enslaved people sought to limit it using whatever means possible, including negotiation, cunning, and escape.

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[231] Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia,* 136.
[232] Albert, *The House of Bondage,* 88–89.
[233] Oliphant, "Compilation Richmond County Ex-Slave Narratives," 301–302.

Along with these tactics, enslaved people utilized certain skills and capabilities necessitated by the oppressive constraints of slavery to create secluded spaces. From constructing houses to crafting boxes to utilizing every possible inch of their dwellings, enslaved people physically built secrecy into their dwellings and their lives. As explored previously, some owners ordered the construction of building types meant to constrict the mobility and freedom of enslaved laborers. Yet it is important to remember that, at many medium and large plantations, enslaved laborers constructed their own dwellings.[234] And the involvement of owners in the construction process varied greatly. Some, like Thomas Jefferson, created detailed instructions and blueprints; others, like the owners of Hampton Plantation in Maryland, dictated exterior architectural flourishes; and still others, like the owners of Melrose Plantation in Louisiana, gave enslaved people significant control over the construction of their living spaces.[235] Of course, with all these sites, enslaved laborers performed the actual construction. Yet buildings like the African House at Melrose Plantation exhibit overt and direct influence of enslaved people on not just the construction but the style of the house, though this appears to be rather rare.[236] Incorporating African architectural elements was not the only manner of integrating enslaved individuals' aesthetic preferences, but it was one of the most obvious

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[234] A Georgia planter-physician noted in 1857 that slave "houses are too often left to the negroes themselves to build in their own time, perhaps at night or during the Sabbath, which easily explains their careless manner of construction." *Advice Among Masters*, 318.

[235] Monticello, Hampton, and Melrose are open to the public and provide documentation showing the various perspectives on this issue.

[236] Scholars debate how "African" the African House is. While some see direct African influence in the steep sloping roof and unique shape, others argue that the house is more a product of creolization than African retention. For the creolization argument, see Jay D. Edwards, "Vernacular Vision: The Gallery and Our Africanized Architectural Landscape," in *Raised to the Trade: Creole Building Arts of New Orleans* (New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 2002), 64–67. For arguments against the interpretations of slave architecture as evidence of West African cultural survivals, see Louis P. Nelson, "The Architectures of Black Identity," *Winterthur Portfolio* 45, no. 2/3 (June 2011): 177–94.

representations of a separate cultural heritage. Owners understood the symbolic significance of architecture, how it demonstrated to observers one's control and authority over space. Allowing enslaved individuals to incorporate their own design aesthetic would indicate that they maintained control over their dwellings. Many owners therefore limited the artistic freedom of enslaved laborers. Residents of St. Simons Island in Georgia remembered what happened when one man, named Okra, attempted to build a hut with his own architectural aesthetic: "Ole man Okra he say he wahn a place lak he hab in Africa so he buil im a hut… But Massuh make im pull it down. He say he ain wahn no African hut on he place."[237]

Regardless of the level of original architectural control, enslaved individuals routinely constructed secluded spaces in their homes. This could be achieved by utilizing available materials and physically cordoning off space for one's family. Much appreciated was the man, remembered William Green, who was "able to get a few boards and get a little time to…partition off a little room for your wife and children." If boards could not be found, men or women would "get old blankets and such like things to make little room for their families."[238] Henry Wright remembered a similar technique of dividing large cabins holding several families with curtains, so that each family had more privacy than a simple one-room cabin would afford.[239]

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[237] Savannah Unit of the Georgia Writers' Project, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 179.
[238] William Green, *Narrative of Events in the Life of William Green* (Springfield: L.M. Guernsey, 1853), 9.
[239] Wright does not make clear whether the owner or the enslaved people hung these cloth partitions. Henry Wright, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Georgia Narratives*, vol. 4, pt. 4, 199. This practice would be continued after slavery in single-family African American homes in Langston, Oklahoma. See M. Jeff Hardwick, "Homesteads and Bungalows: African American Architecture in Langston, Oklahoma" (MA thesis, University of Delaware, 1994), 65–70.

Building secrecy in one's home also took the form of creating concealed spaces for meaningful and sometimes subversive materials. Thomas Jones hired out his time and saved whatever money his owner did not collect in a makeshift moneybox, hoping to one day have enough money to buy his family's freedom. Such a small object might seem of little importance, but it represented the lack of privacy existent in slave dwellings, as well as the possibility of privacy in freedom. Jones maintained he built this moneybox because of the fear that patrollers would enter his home and steal his hard-earned money. Living out from his owner, Jones did not have the opportunity to utilize his protection, and so he kept the moneybox in a hole he dug within his home. Although Jones would wake in the night, agonizing that the patrollers "have taken my box" and thus his family would never be free, he also believed that the box represented the greatest possibility to attain a private, safe, free home for his family. It was in this box, containing what little money could be saved, that the "hopes and fears" of his family were contained.[240] Even as Jones knew that "the wretched home of the unprotected slave" had no privacy, he built small but important elements of secrecy into his home and life.[241]

Enslaved individuals also appropriated objects to function as secluded spaces. Located within their homes, these objects provided cover for actions that could be deemed subversive by owners, overseers, or patrols. Depending upon the proclivities of an owner, an enslaved individual or family might be given a trunk or box to keep assorted goods. The formerly enslaved woman Nancy Bacon, in her 1874 testimony to the Southern Claims Commission, reported Union soldiers stole the silver and clothing she

[240] Jones, *Experience and Personal Narrative of Uncle Tom Jones*, 26.
[241] Ibid., 23.

kept in a trunk in her dwelling.[242] Allen Allensworth recounted the privilege of having "a plain candle box in which to keep his little belongings," which included small luxuries like a comb.[243] It would be logical that owners would not provide locks and keys for these boxes, since that would give a semblance of privacy that many did not provide for their enslaved property. Charles Ball, for one, remembered that an "old box, made of pine boards, without either lock or hinges, occupied one corner of a common [slave] cabin" in the US South.[244] Without locks or hinges, these boxes provided easy access to those who wished to snoop inside. And yet enslaved individuals might craft locks for their boxes. While still a slave, William Craft assembled many pieces of furniture for him and his wife to supplement their meager allotment, including a chest of drawers with locks that hid and kept safe subversive articles such as a disguise for their escape from slavery. When locked away in the dresser, "No one about the premises knew that she had anything of the kind."[245]

Locks could be used to keep unauthorized individuals out of their things, and also out of their homes. While locks were certainly used to forcibly keep enslaved people in, they could also be used to keep hostile white or black individuals out. The carpenter at Orange Hall plantation in South Carolina purchased padlocks to keep his possessions safe from prying hands.[246] Historian Roderick McDonald found evidence of homemade

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[242] Testimony of Nancy Bacon, 14 March 1874, Claim of Nancy Bacon (box 159), Liberty Co. GA case files, Approved Claims, ser. 732, Southern Claims Commission, 3rd Auditor, RG 217 [FSSP 1-290], Freedmen and Southern Society Project (FSSP), University of Maryland.
[243] Charles Alexander, *Battles and Victories of Allen Allensworth, A.M. Ph.D. Lieutenant-Colonel, retired, U.S. Army* (Boston, Mass.: Sherman, French & Co., 1914), 28.
[244] Ball, *Fifty Years In Chains,* 114.
[245] William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom; or, the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (London: Richard Barrett, 1860), 31.
[246]Lawrence T. McDonnell uses this as evidence for how the market economy and private property could fracture slave society. See Lawrence T. McDonnell, "Money Knows No Master: Market Relations and the

wooden locks, keys, and bolts to secure dwellings in Jamaica, while some Louisiana enslaved laborers purchased locks.[247] While traveling throughout the southern states, Frederick Law Olmsted recounted slave homes at two plantations that included indoor closets with locks. Some cabins even contained external locks, for enslaved laborers to secure their cabins while working during the day.[248] Charles Ball described an incident in his narrative, wherein a slave family attempted to secure their house with a makeshift lock by fastening a string to a nail in the post of the door.[249] This lock failed, and eventually white men burst down the door, yet the presence of the lock shows their desire for privacy. Obviously locks could not keep unauthorized persons out of an enslaved individual's home or goods. Harwood Alexander Lockett remembered how his uncle broke into the locked trunk of Stephen, an enslaved man, after he refused to open it. A lock would not keep out someone who felt they owned the person and object in question. Yet Stephen's refusal shows his belief that these were his possessions, that he held some kind of right of refusal in who accessed them. Even if the lock could not keep out Lockett's uncle, Stephen's use of the lock reveals his willingness to assert his right to secluded spaces.[250]

Any available space had the potential to be transformed into a secretive or concealed one. Slave management writers advised owners and overseers to demand that

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American Slave Community," in *Developing Dixie: Modernization in a Traditional Society,* eds. Winfred B. Moore, Jr., Joseph F. Tripp, and Lyon G. Tyler, Jr. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 37.

[247] Roderick A. McDonald, *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 75, 109, 145–46.

[248] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard States: With Remarks on Their Economy* (New York: Dox and Edwards, 1856), 111, 422.

[249] Ball, *Fifty Years In Chains,* 232–33.

[250] Autobiography of Harwood Alexander Lockett*,* in Myrta Lockett Papers, VHS.

open spaces in, below, and around dwellings be kept free of "filth."[251] One planter from the Lower South maintained that all "filth and trash" stored by enslaved individuals underneath their raised houses should be frequently removed.[252] Obviously, owners supported this habit as it maintained the cleanliness of the dwelling and the health of its inhabitants. Yet these comments also reveal a less beneficent motivation: a desire for total control and surveillance of black spaces. Many owners and overseers ignored or permitted the use of spaces that held "filth," for the archaeological and textual record demonstrates that chinks of cabins or crawl spaces under them continued to be used to hold enslaved people's stuff. Regardless of an owner's proscriptions, it is clear that enslaved individuals continued to utilize these spaces to store and potentially conceal objects. Owners may have regarded these goods as mere "filth," but such trash could either hide valuables or itself be regarded as something valuable by those who placed it there. Enough enslaved laborers utilized the chinks in cabin walls, the space underneath raised houses, and the ground outside their dwellings to compel owners, overseers, and other observers of slavery to worry about this action beyond its health impact. Even if these spaces and the objects placed within them were partially visible, utilizing every bit of space was a resourceful method of finding personal spaces within slave dwellings.[253]

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[251] From more on how enslaved people's "trash" can tell us much about their lives and circumstances, see Ywone D. Edwards, "'Trash' Revisited: A Comparative Approach to Historical Descriptions and Archaeological Analysis of Slave Houses and Yards," in *Keep Your Head to the Sky: Interpreting African American Home Ground,* ed. Grey Gundaker (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 245–72.
[252] *Advice Among Masters*, 124.
[253] Additionally, Larry McKee argues that the dirtiness of cabins and quarters was actually a resistance tactic against an owner's control of domestic spaces. Larry W. McKee, "The Ideals and Realities Behind the Design and Use of 19th century Virginia Slave Cabins," in *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz*, eds. Anne Elizabeth Yentsch and Mary Carolyn Beaudry (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 1992), 195–213.

Other, more concealed spaces within dwellings provided better storage and hiding places. Subfloor pits were especially useful. As noted in chapter one, subfloor pits were dug into the ground of a cabin, and functioned as cool, dry places to store items like sweet potatoes. They could also be used to keep subversive objects hidden from the gaze of overseers or owners.[254] Plantation management advisors sought to limit the creation and use of these pits, framing the issue as one of health. One planter noted that subfloor pits "uniformly become a receptacle for filth" and "should no means be allowed."[255] Yet the problem with subfloor pits from the perspective of slave owners was not just the health of enslaved laborers; it was that these hidden spaces gave enslaved people concealed spaces. Still, men and women continued to build them.

Scholars have long known that enslaved individuals built subfloor pits in the colonial-era Chesapeake region, but recent archaeological evidence shows that these pits continued to be constructed and used far beyond the late eighteenth century. Excavations in the winter of 2015–2016 at the Greenfield Plantation in Botetourt County, Virginia revealed an 1860 political token in the pit fill of a slave cabin. Picturing Democrat Stephen Douglas and his running mate, Hershel Johnson, this token is an intriguing find within the confines of a slave cabin.[256] The possibilities as to why and how this object got into a slave dwelling are many, but its presence notes the potential use of a subfloor pit for the disposal or storage of potentially subversive objects. Exactly who was pictured on

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[254] For more on subfloor pits, see Patricia Samford, *Subfloor Pits and the Archaeology of Slavery in Colonial Virginia* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007). For an archaeological interpretation of subfloor pits as spaces of secrecy, or even privacy, see Amy L. Young, "Risk Management Strategies Among African-American Slaves at Locust Grove Plantation," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 1, no. 1 (1997): 5–37.

[255] *Advice Among Masters*, 121.

[256] Kerry S. González, "Greenfield Token," Dovetail Cultural Resource Group, http://www.dovetailcrg.com/greenfield-token. Accessed June 21, 2106.

the token was less important than its political nature. A token makes a political statement, that one is engaged with political discourse and embodies the right to participate in politics.[257] An enslaved person was supposedly incapable of the latter if not also the former. When they placed this token in the subfloor pit, it could have been regarded as trash or treasure. But their use of this concealed space to dispose or hide a subversive object indicates how enslaved people created secrecy in their dwellings.

Solomon Northup, for instance, used the ground under the wooden board upon which he slept as a hiding spot for his unapproved writing goods.[258] Likewise, Octavia Albert's Uncle Stephen revealed that he had a "secret place in my cabin," where he stored pictures of himself and his mother, books, old passes, and counterfeit free papers.[259] The fictional story of Ida May, a white girl stolen from her family and sold into slavery, depicts how Venus, an enslaved woman, built a "closet" in the side of a tree beside her dwelling door. Venus tells Ida that since, "I a'n't got no trunk wid a lock onto it…when I wants to keep things hid safe, I put 'em in some hole like dis, and plasters 'em up wid clay."[260] Of course, building these spaces into homes did not guarantee security. They were still non-autonomous private spaces and liable to be entered or surveiled at any moment, as was the case for both Northup and Uncle Stephen, whose hiding places were found when white men entered their dwellings.

So even as they built elements of secrecy into their homes and lives, many recognized that these elements could be nullified while they were still enslaved. Enslaved

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[257] Stephanie Camp describes other instances of enslaved participation in national politics in the slave home in chapter 4, "Amalgamation Prints Stuck Up in Her Cabin: Print Culture, the Home, and the Roots of Resistance," in *Closer to Freedom*, 93–116.
[258] Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave,* 230.
[259] Albert, *The House of Bondage,* 110.
[260] Mary Langdon, *Ida May: A Story of Things Actual and Possible* (Boston, Mass.: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1854), 128.

women and men understood that within slavery, there was no hope of security. While laws protected the homes of free Americans—even free black individuals retained some legal authority over their homes—there was no such recourse for the enslaved, and many believed there never would be under the system of slavery. Harriet Jacobs declared that, "If slavery had been abolished…I could have had a home shielded by the laws…but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery."[261] Enslaved individuals seemed to recognize, on some level, that the homes of free individuals, particularly white folks, held special privileges that enslaved homes did not. They resided with security and privacy in what Frederick Douglass described, perhaps tongue in cheek, as "the sacred precincts of the great house."[262]

William Grimes felt the pain of this reality, supposing "himself a husband and father, possessed of a house, home, and livelihood," yet always knowing that at any moment, it could be that "a stranger enters that house; before his children, and in far daylight, puts the chain on his leg, where it remains till the last cent of his property buys from avarice and cruelty, the remnant of a life, whose best years had been spent in misery!"[263] Even those who felt there was little safety and no certitude in leaving the confines of slavery and their dwelling understood that by remaining they could never have domestic privacy and protection. On learning of her husband's intentions to run away, Josiah Henson's wife "besought me to remain at home contented," for as "[s]he knew nothing of the wide world beyond…her imagination peopled it with horrors." Henson calmly defended his plan: "I explained to her our liability to be torn asunder at

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[261] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 83–84.
[262] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 107.
[263] William Grimes, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Brought Down to the Present Time* (New Haven: Published by the Author, 1855 [originally 1824]), iv.

any moment, the horrors of the slavery I had lately seen in the South, and the happiness we might enjoy together in a land of freedom."[264] Their current home, as a slave dwelling, would never be safe. Better to face the unknown with the possibility of reaching freedom than to remain forever in the uncertainty and fear of slavery.

For enslaved individuals, freedom promised what slavery denied: private, safe, secure homes. In describing the drastically different experiences of home in slavery and freedom, Frederick Douglass commented on the lack of power and privacy over body and home in slavery and the promise of such things in freedom. In slavery, "a law which I can clearly comprehend, but cannot evade nor resist," took him from this grandmother's hearth, the only home he claimed he ever had. This law forced him to move and change his dwellings multiple times over the next year, so often that "by the time I have formed new attachments…I am again broken up."[265] The right to decide one's movements, to ensure security and safety, to be left alone in the home, came only with freedom. And so it was that in freedom Douglass's family could be "in comfortable beds…sound asleep, perfectly secure under my own roof." Reflecting many of the tenets of Victorian manhood and home, Douglass proclaimed that in his free home, "There are no slaveholders here to rend my heart by snatching them from my arms, or blast a mother's dearest hopes by tearing them from her bosom. These dear children are ours—not to work up into rice, sugar, and tobacco, but to watch over, regard, and protect."[266] The domestic spaces of slavery were open to intrusion and violation. The laws that did protect them were meant to protect them as property of others. And they sometimes did not even

[264] Henry Bleby, *Josiah: The Maimed Fugitive. A True Tale* (London: 1873), 103.
[265] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 206.
[266] Ibid., 426.

do that. "The extent, the atrocity, and the frequency, and the impunity of barbarous Outrages upon Slaves," abolitionist William Goodell argued, "shows that the Laws afford them little or no Protection."[267] As long as they were considered first and foremost pieces of property, they could never maintain—through legal or other means—that they deserved the right of privacy. Enslaved men and women placed great hope in the promises of freedom to reverse this, to make black dwellings private, protected spaces where families could reside with security. As historian Thavolia Glymph so clearly put it, "Freedom…meant privacy in the home."[268]

Unfortunately for many black Americans in the North, even freedom did not provide privacy in the home. Rioting mobs destroyed free black homes throughout the antebellum urban North. From 1829 to 1834, at least three different riots destroyed hundreds of black homes, a fact that continued to haunt black Americans late into the nineteenth century.[269] With the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, the issue of protection and security came to a head. Escaped and free black Americans could no longer claim the right to privacy and protection in their northern homes when slave catchers could enter with no authorization. While Frederick Douglass, who had officially purchased his freedom in the mid-1850s, felt relatively safe in his northern home, he recognized how other fugitive slaves in the North felt unsure and unsafe in their supposedly free homes. After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, Douglass observed in Western New York and beyond that, "Fugitive slaves…some of whom had by industry

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[267] William Goodell, *The American Slave Code in Theory and Practice; Its Distinctive Features Shewn by Its Statutes, Judicial Decisions, & Illustrative Facts* (London: Clarke, Beeton &Company, 1853), 193.
[268] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 169.
[269] An 1888 article recounts the various riots wherein "hundreds of law-abiding colored families were driven into the streets, while their homes were given to the flames. "Joseph Cassey, $50,000," *Republic*, 19 August 1888, Box 132-1, Folder 18, Thomas and William Dorsey Collection, MSRC.

and economy saved money and bought little homes for themselves and their children, were suddenly alarmed and compelled to flee to Canada for safety."[270] Reflecting on the life of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, a pioneer in black journalism and a strong proponent of black migration to Canada, an unknown author noted, "the consternation, the fear and trembling that entered the homes of thousands of colored families who had been for many years regarded as free."[271]

The story of Solomon Northup illustrated how free black Americans did not have the right to privacy in their own homes. An advertisement for Northup's narrative that appeared at the end of Frederick Douglass's 1855 autobiography described this lack of privacy, noting that Northup had been "[f]or thirty years A MAN…with a home, humble it may be, but still a HOME, beneath the shelter of whose roof none had a right to molest or make him afraid," yet he had been "torn from his home and family" and sold into slavery.[272] Although Northup's actual capture occurred not in his home in New York but in at a Washington, D.C. hotel, the advertisement makes clear that these white men were indeed ripping Northup from his home, and that free black homes in the North were *supposed* to be private spaces in which no man—white or black—had the right to intrude and violate the privacy and sanctity of home. Anti-abolition riots in the 1830s made this clear on a large scale. Later legal and cultural proscriptions also denied this right to black Americans, especially after the 1857 Dred Scott decision denied citizenship and its attendant rights—including the 4th Amendment of the US Constitution that forbade the

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[270] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (Hartford, Conn: Park Publishing Company, 1881), 286.
[271] "Mary Ann Shadd Cary. 1823-1893. The Foremost Colored Canadian Pioneer in 1850," Box 13-1, Folder 1, Mary Add Shadd Cary Papers, MSRC.
[272] "Twelve Years a Slave," in Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 467.

unreasonable searches of houses—to all black Americans.[273] From this accursed decision, Douglass declared, it became clear that the US government believed "colored person of African descent have no rights that white men are bound to respect."[274] Unable to control who could and could not enter their homes, unable to protect their families and themselves in their own homes, black men and women who had escaped from slavery to freedom in the North realized that slave owners' racialized ideology of privacy—which argued that black homes were inherently non-autonomous private spaces—had followed them. And so it would only be with complete abolition of slavery and the acquisition of citizenship rights that black Americans could build and inhabit safe, secure, private homes.

The connection between home, privacy, and freedom was strong for those who experienced slavery, and would continue to be for generations. Decades after emancipation, formerly enslaved individuals would remember the complicated domestic situation they inhabited: at once open to their owners yet closed to other whites; liable to be surveilled or invaded at any time, yet protected at certain points. Not even those constraints stopped them from building secret and concealed spaces and moments into their homes and life. Still, they grasped that, in slavery, privacy on their own terms was impossible. Enslaved people understood the complex assembly of ideas that denied them the rights of home, including privacy, and knew that only with freedom could this

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[273] These examples—the Fugitive Slave Law and the Dred Scott decision—were just two of many proscriptions and legal declarations that limited the privacy of free blacks in the North and South, including laws limiting mobility in and out of states, and laws requiring the display of a badge on city streets.
[274] Frederick Douglass, *Two Speeches by Frederick Douglass; West India Emancipation… And the Dred Scott Decision* (Rochester: C. P. Dewey, 1857), 31.

situation be reversed. Even as slave owners and the dominant white society sought to deny them the rights of home, to deny them the sanctity and security of home, enslaved women and men struggled to build homes. Although many would rightly declare that their slave homes were not ideal, that did not diminish the importance of home for the enslaved. For the enslaved, both the reality of the slave home and their dreams of private, safe, and secure homes in freedom provided an important counter to the destructive nature of slavery.

CHAPTER THREE

"Home and Home Affections":
Slave Dwellings and the Meaning of Freedom

Writing of his life in slavery, Thomas Jones expressed his belief that enslaved Americans shared a natural, acute longing for home: "no one can have…such intensity of desire for home and home affections, as the poor slave."[275] This twin desire for "home and home affections," for a physical house to call one's own filled with family, shaped both experiences of enslavement and understandings of freedom. Born in 1806 in Hanover County, North Carolina, Jones lived with his parents and five siblings for the first nine years of his life. During these nine years Jones formed his understanding of home. Memories of the dwelling, family relations, and its violent disruption remained with him. Jones connected the physical building to his concept of home, remembering "well that dear old cabin, with its clay floor and mud chimney" in which his parents "tried to make it a happy place for their dear children."[276] It was in his home that he was forever separated from his family, whisked away as powerful arms "hurried me out of the house where I was born, my only home, and tore me away from the dear mother who loved me as no other friend could do."[277] It was often, after this separation, that "thoughts of home

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[275] Thomas H. Jones, *Experience and Personal Narrative of Uncle Tom Jones; Who Was for Forty Years a Slave*... (Boston, Mass.: H. B. Skinner, 1854[?]), 23.
[276] Ibid., 7. Most nineteenth-century slave narratives expressed some fond memory of home. Typically, they recounted a memory from youth, usually a time when they did not yet understand they were slaves. For work exploring the moment when enslaved children became cognizant of their status, see Rachael L. Pasierowska, "Up from Childhood: When African-American Enslaved Children Learned of Their Servile Status," *Slavery & Abolition* 37, no. 1 (March 2016): 94–116; Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 104; Damian Alan Pargas, "From the Cradle to the Fields: Slave Childcare and Childhood in the Antebellum South," *Slavery & Abolition* 32 (2011): 477–93.
[277] Jones, *Experience and Personal Narrative of Uncle Tom Jones*, 9.

came so fresh and tender into my mind," leading him both to desolation and action.[278] Jones moved to purchase his freedom and that of his family, always with the memory and hope of home in his mind. Jones pleaded that God "guide me soon to a free home with my beloved family," for freedom was not just a piece of paper; it was a free and safe home.[279]

Scholars have long employed two frameworks in their analyses of slavery: family or community, which developed alongside one another in the 1970s and 1980s. Some scholars, most notably Herbert Gutman, Jacqueline Jones, Ann Patton Malone, and Leslie Schwalm demonstrated that family was central to enslaved people's resistance against slavery. On the other side, historians such as John Blassingame, George Rawick, Brenda Stevenson, Charles Joyner, Eugene Genovese, and others opted to foreground slave communities rather than families. Both frameworks allowed scholars to contribute novel and valuable understandings of the malleability of households, kin, and slave networks, and the role of these connections in resisting slavery. But these frameworks have left the important question of how enslaved people understood and related to their homes largely unaddressed. More recent historiographical trends, including the recent shift towards the relationship between slavery and capitalism, have similarly done little to address what is clearly (from the material and textual record) a significant aspect of the lives of enslaved men, women, and children.[280] Additionally, scholars tend to disregard the complex ways

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[278] Ibid., 10.

[279] Ibid., 27. This point was reinforced for Jones, who fled to Canada in the 1850s to escape the re-enslavement of his family and himself. Jones had been a part of the abolitionist movement since 1849, when he escaped North Carolina for New York. He wrote and sold his memoir, in part, to finance the purchase of his eldest son out of slavery, a tactic common to black abolitionists. *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, vol. 2, Canada, 1830-1865, eds. C. Peter Ripley et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 134–35.

[280] Some of the biggest titles in this trend include Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*

that ideas and the material world of home were intimately connected. Historical archaeologists, landscape historians, and architectural historians have shed light on the material conditions of enslavement, yet they leave the reader asking what these domestic spaces actually meant to those who inhabited them.[281] How enslaved people understood their domestic structures as "home," then, rarely factors into the scholarly conversation. Scholars are understandably wary of applying a term like home to a domestic space associated with the bonds of slavery. For example, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese did not use the term home in her seminal work *Within the Plantation Household* because home, as she described it, "is a modern and ideologically charged term."[282] From her perspective, it did not seem appropriate to discuss home in relation to the southern plantation. But this decision elides the meaning that enslaved women, men, and children gave to their dwellings. Focusing on enslaved people's homes, how they defined and constructed those homes and how the meaning and materiality of home shaped their world, balances and enriches these scholars' discussions of slave culture, ideology, politics, and resistance.

One notable exception to the dearth of scholarship on slave homes is Stephanie M. H. Camp's 2004 *Closer to Freedom*, which demonstrates enslaved women's use of dwellings as a site of resistance. In particular, Camp shows how enslaved women formed

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(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

[281] John Michael Vlach's 1993 *Back of the Big House* reoriented the meaning of plantation architecture from the slave owner's house to the slave quarters and instigated a wave of scholarship on the built environment of slavery. The most comprehensive contribution to slave landscape historiography is *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*, eds. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010). Still, the connection between the materiality and meaning of slave homes is understudied.

[282] Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household,* 31. As I argue in the Introduction, home is not a modern term but rather a historically contingent one, and its ideological charge is what makes it such an important concept to study.

political identity in the home, where they could "encourage opposition to slavery."[283] Yet even with Camp's important historiographical contribution, revealing enslaved people's belief in the value of their homes, she does not delve into the broader meaning of home. Noting that enslaved individuals imbued their homes with "passions," still Camp does not go beyond the "passion" of resistance to understand broader conceptions of home.[284] Resistance was an everyday activity for enslaved people, but it certainly was not the only lens through which enslaved people constructed belief systems.[285] Textual and material sources indicate that enslaved Americans created meaning for both the tangible spaces and abstract conceptions of home.[286] Through imagination and conversation, enslaved Americans constructed malleable and broad understandings of home that were vital to their conceptions of freedom. But the slave home was not only a site of resistance and oppression for the enslaved who actually lived there; the meaning and materiality of slave homes likewise played an integral role in the public debates over the institution of slavery. Exploring the use of home in anti- and pro-slavery writings extends the discussion past the everyday resistance of the enslaved towards how the lives and homes of the enslaved (whether real or imagined) influenced the most important question of the nineteenth century: who is slave and who is free?

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[283] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 116.
[284] Ibid., 94.
[285] Walter Johnson has shown the dangers of fetishizing resistance in slavery studies. Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (Autumn, 2003): 113–24.
[286] Noralee Frankel briefly examines a few different meanings of home for enslaved people in Mississippi, focusing on the importance of family in defining home and freedom. Her examination is brief, however, and focuses more on freed people's understanding of home. To fully understand postbellum freedom, we need to more fully investigate antebellum understandings of home and freedom. Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), esp. 19–20.

The slave home thus played a number of different roles, two of which are explored in depth here. First, home was an ever-evolving concept deeply tied to the materiality of the space, structure, and objects that comprised it. It is true that no two people can have the same exact understanding of home, but the words, buildings, and objects enslaved people left behind reveal connections among the diversity. The threads that connect the many ideologies of home can be boiled down to three elements that contributed to those meanings: the physicality of home, presence or absence of family, and hopes for future free home. The lived experience of enslaved domestic situations was, for most, uncomfortable and difficult. Some were provided with adequate housing, yet material evidence indicates that many lived in dilapidated structures unfit for occupancy. This led some formerly enslaved individuals to remember their homes overwhelmingly with disdain. As archaeologist Charles Orser asserts, "slaves remembered their cabins for what they were: primitive shelters for use at the end of a long work day... Similar descriptions provided by other former slaves imply that most slave housing was simple, inadequate, and far from ideal."[287] Still, the import of home went beyond the structure that surrounded the enslaved. Living in such difficult situations made enslaved people look towards the future and what it might hold, and many focused on what freedom could give them: a private, safe, secure home. Although enslaved people defined it in varying ways, they found great meaning and hope in the idea and space of home, directly connecting freedom with the ability to build and maintain free homes.

[287] Charles E. Orser, Jr., *The Material Basis of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation: Historical Archaeology in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 15

Second, the slave home was a trope used in the battle between pro- and anti-slavery activists. Both sides of the slave debate used the slave home trope in their writings, though their descriptions and motivations varied greatly. While pro-slavery writers extolled the comfort and goodness of slave homes, anti-slavery activists depicted slave homes as dirty, dilapidated, and inadequate for instilling morality. Abolitionists presented cases wherein enslaved individuals, especially women, established virtuousness within the home, while at other times arguing that slave homes (with their lack of privacy) could never inculcate the values of an ideal Victorian home. Like all homes—though to a much greater extent—slave homes fell short of the ideals of inhabitants and/or society, in large part due to the violent mechanisms of surveillance, intrusion, and containment. But this did not make slave homes less important or less real to the enslaved who inhabited them and to those who employed the trope in their writings.

Home was never a homogenous concept; the diversity of enslaved living conditions and lived experiences across the US South meant that home meant many things and took many forms.[288] Enslaved individuals defined home in ways historically, culturally, and locally contingent. The meaning of home certainly changed over time, but was also contingent on cultural understandings of home and more specific local iterations. Home had as much to do with specific, local factors as it did with a transregional malleable ideology of home to which all enslaved subscribed. Yet even

[288] It is common for scholars to argue that most enslaved individuals in the antebellum South lived in one-room structures. Based on extant structures and textual sources, many certainly did, though a great number did not. See, for example, Carolyn Murray-Wooley's use of stone double-pen cabins to refute arguments about the typicality of one-room structures by archaeologists at Locust Grove in Kentucky. Carolyn Murray-Wooley, "Communications," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 97, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 337–46. This argument about one-room cabins likely evolves from readings of travelers' accounts, literature, and postbellum representations of slavery, which tended to depict slave dwellings as one-room cabins. For more on that, see chapter 6.

with the diversity represented through textual sources, there are certain commonalities to which we can begin to understand a broader enslaved ideology of home. This enslaved ideology was built in opposition to, though in conversation with, the racialized ideology of home produced by slave owners.

Importantly, while the constant threat and fear of sale did not prevent enslaved people from creating homes, the potential upheaval of family, kin, and community required a malleable definition of home.[289] Home was not applicable only to a dwelling or to one particular kind of space. In their narratives, former slaves used the term home to denote the general area in which they lived and labored. Rather than a specific building or single space, the many spaces of an entire plantation or of contiguous plantations made up the place of home. Home often encompassed a garden, the quarters, or even the entire plantation.[290] Much of life happened outside of one's dwelling, but these structures were understood as connected to these broader "home" spaces and evinced deep meaning for the enslaved.[291] Home was therefore not always a specific domestic structure, as some enslaved men and women did not have cabins or even rooms to call their own. When forced to work in the main house, Peter Bruner "had to sleep on the floor and have

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[289] As Nancy Bentley has shown, enslaved individuals did not lack kinfolk but still lived under a system in which their ties to kin had little social or juridical backing. Bentley refers to this as "kinlessness." Nancy Bentley, "The Fourth Dimension: Kinlessness and African American Narrative," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 270–292.

[290] Whitney Battle-Baptiste has examined how gardens and yards were extensions of slave houses, maintained usually by women as a barrier between home and the larger plantation. Battle-Baptist, "Sweepin' Spirits: Power and Transformation on the Plantation Landscape," in *Archaeology and Preservation of Gendered Landscapes*, eds. Sherene Baugher and Suzanna M. Spencer-Wood (New York: Springer, 2010), 81–94.

[291] Archaeologist Leland Ferguson, based on excavations in South Carolina, asserts that since slave dwellings were very small, most activities took place outside these structures. While a logical conclusion, it does not negate the activities, objects, and meaning of the dwelling for enslaved women, men, and children. Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 68.

nothing but a few ragged quilts."[292] Many enslaved women and men like Bruner who worked in the "Big House" were required to sleep near their owners, sometimes in a nearby room or, in the case of Louis Hughes, on the dining room floor.[293] George Womble told his WPA interviewer that he, like Hughes, "slept in the house under the dining room table all of the time."[294] Edgar Bendy similarly reported that "I didn't have no house of my own, 'cause de marster, he give me de room in he house."[295] Bendy did not express whether his living space was adequate or comfortable or terrible, but he recognized that he had no place to call his own.

For Hughes and others like him, home simply referred to the plantation. Home, in this case, may signify an enslaved person's connection to what Anthony Kaye refers to as the slave "neighborhood," a union of people, activities, and spaces that enslaved individuals conceived.[296] Queen Bruce, writing to her former mistress Annie Cameron Sims in 1888, expressed that she expected to visit the old plantation soon, and that although she is now free and "surrounded by all the comforts of life but I must say I have…realized there is [no] place like home."[297] Even though Bruce cherished the comforts of freedom, she still associated home with the spaces in which she lived and labored for many years. This may have been the case of a freed person writing what her former owner wanted to hear, but considering she was willing to admit to enjoying her

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[292] Peter Bruner, *A Slaves' Adventures Toward Freedom, Not Fiction, but the True Story of a Struggle* (Oxford, Ohio: 1918), 13.
[293] Louis Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom: The Institution of Slavery as Seen on the Plantation and in the Home of the Planter* (Milwaukee: 1897), 24.
[294] George Womble, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 4, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 187.
[295] Edgar Bendy, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 1, 66.
[296] Anthony E. Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), esp. 4–12.
[297] Queen Bruce to Annie Cameron (Ruffin) Sims, 23 May 23 1888, section 15, Bailey Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society (VHS).

present comforts, showing her former mistress that she was better off in freedom, she likely defined home in part as the larger plantation complex.

Many different kinds of domestic arrangements and living situations existed for enslaved people, sometimes on the same plantation. Some enslaved laborers lived with family or strangers in a single-room dwelling, others were grouped together in barracks-style quarters. Indeed, the physicality of home could differ greatly for those owned by the same person. Frederick Douglass described the diversity of dwellings on one single plantation:

> A little nearer to my old master's, stood a very long, rough, low building, literally alive with slaves, of all ages, conditions and sizes. This was called "the Long Quarter." Perched upon a hill, across the Long Green, was a very tall, dilapidated, old brick building…now occupied by slaves, in a similar manner to the Long Quarter. Besides these, there were numerous other slave houses and huts, scattered around in the neighborhood, every nook and corner of which was completely occupied.[298]

As Douglass made clear, the diversity of domestic situations for enslaved people was considerable. Architectural historian Jobie Hill has catalogued a dozen common housing types found in the twentieth-century photographic collection of the Historic American Buildings Survey, which points to the large range of building styles possible for slave dwellings.[299] These diverse physical iterations affected the way enslaved people defined home, making each individual's understanding of the concept unique.

Slave owners' preferences and resources influenced the physical dwelling of enslaved people, especially its comfort level. The size, number of rooms, and amount of people within a structure was a major determinant of comfort. Richard Eppes

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[298] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 66.
[299] Jobie Hill, "Humanizing HABS: Rethinking the Historic American Buildings Survey's Role in Interpreting Antebellum Slave Houses," (MA thesis, University of Oregon, 2013), 58–60.

documented three dwellings for his 38 enslaved laborers at his Island Estate south of Richmond, another Virginia planter expressed his belief that one double-sided cabin of two 12 x 10 feet rooms would fit 32 people "comfortably."[300] Slave management studies, popular in southern agricultural journals from the 1830s through the early 1860s, presented varying views from plantation managers on the most advantageous number of enslaved people per dwelling. A Mississippi planter-physician of a small plantation expressed in 1847 his opinion that slave dwellings should be merely 18x20 feet and only contain a man, woman, and three to four small children, although he did not specify what "small" entailed.[301]

The comfort of slave dwellings was a key point of discussion for slave owners engaged in the consideration of plantation management, but conversations illustrate their priority of profits over the emotional well-being of their enslaved laborers. Planters were not so self-delusional about their paternalism to deny the primacy of profits; a planter owning a large estate in Mississippi put it bluntly in 1851 that, "if humanity will not point out the proper remedy, let self-interest for once act as a virtue and prompt him to save the health and lives of his negroes by at once providing comfortable quarters for them."[302] But slave houses typically remained cramped and uncomfortable, a fact recognized by slave owners. Some tried to build more accommodating spaces and urged their fellow slave owners to do so, but it still stood as "a well known fact" in 1856 that, according to

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[300] Diary of Richard Eppes, 1 October 1851, section 39, Eppes Family Papers, VHS. *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South*, ed. James O. Breeden (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 116.
[301] *Advice Among Masters*, 120.
[302] Ibid., 122.

one Mississippian, "negroes are not, as a general thing, as well provided for in the way of comfortable dwellings as they might be."[303]

The lack of comfort played a major role in the way formerly enslaved people remembered their slave homes.[304] Some compared their substandard dwellings to the pleasant houses of their masters. Jenny Proctor juxtaposed her former master's "good house…plum 'spectable lookin' even to de plank floors" with "dem little huts wid dirt floors" that some three hundred enslaved people lived in.[305] Similarly, Carter J. Jackson compared the "good, big frame house" of his owner with the enslaved peoples' "log houses what had dirt floors and chimneys." Jackson also noted differences in bedding, a frequent topic in slave narratives, noting his "bunks had rope slats and grass mattress," but he "sho' wish I could have cotch myself sleepin' on a feather bed in them days."[306] Steve Williams seconded such feelings, maintaining that while "Our beddin' wasn't too good, jes' fair cotton beds," the "Ole marster's folk dey have big feather beds."[307] These statements demonstrate resentment from the enslaved people who lived in cramped, crude, and sometimes dilapidated housing. They associated these uncomfortable dwellings with slavery, making the reverse—comfort—associated with freedom.

Resentful memories also stemmed from the fact that their houses were not theirs at all; in fact, the slave houses were much more permanent than those who dwelled in

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[303] Ibid., 127.
[304] The political objective or contemporary circumstances of a narrator influenced the way in which a person described his or her dwelling. For instance, most antebellum slave narratives detail deplorable living conditions in ramshackle houses. This perspective contributed to their anti-slavery arguments, but does not automatically disprove the veracity of their statements. In twentieth-century WPA narratives, many describe their former slave dwellings as pleasant, often noting that they were better than the houses they currently live in. These statements reflect current living conditions as much as past ones, and such evaluations of slave dwellings should be balanced with other source materials.
[305] Jenny Proctor, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 3, 212.
[306] Carter J. Jackson, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 6, pt 2, 180.
[307] Steve Williams, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 6, pt 4, 180.

them. Owners sought to instill a balance of ownership and impermanency in slave dwellings. Charles Ball felt this acutely, noting in his narrative that, "I was ordered to my house as it was called."[308] Others may call it his house, but Ball would never consider it as such. While Ball's owner wanted his human property to think of their domestic spaces as their own, the potential for sale and forced separation added a transitory element to all slave dwellings. Additionally, owners imbued slave cabins with material indications that its inhabitants were not permanent. This could be as simple as the practice of nailing beds into the walls of cabins, which not only served the purpose of being sturdier but also reinforced that objects of one's supposed home would stay in place regardless of whether the dwellers would.[309] While it is unclear whether such a practice was common in non-slave homes, in the context of slave homes this fastening reiterated that one's dwelling and the objects within it were not, in fact, one's own.

Even so, enslaved people created a more comfortable home atmosphere by improving the buildings, furniture, and domestic objects. This was not a tactic utilized solely by enslaved people. Crude houses and scant furniture were common for settlers from the earliest days of American exploration through the twentieth century. Brenda Stevenson, for example, notes that eighteenth-century settlers in Loudon County, Virginia, nearly all had small, cramped houses with only furniture they could make or barter for.[310] Yet material accumulation and ascending the social ladder was possible for white settlers, while enslaved people lived with the fear that they would be ripped out of

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[308] Charles Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: H. Dayton, 1859), 401.
[309] WPA Narratives describe this technique: Campbell Davis, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 1, 285; and Jenny Proctor, 209.
[310] Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 20–21.

their domestic settings and sold to contribute to whites' material well-being. Additionally, while some enslaved people were granted the privilege of "owning" property, their claims did not have the legal backing that white claims did.[311] Dangerfield Hunter, an enslaved man in August County, Virginia, even recorded a will in 1856, distributing his possessions as he saw fit.[312] With no legal backing, however, this will could not ensure that Hunter's possessions would not be repossessed by Louis Abraham Pauly (Hunter's owner) and distributed at *his* will. Ceraphin Lacase of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, claimed $260 worth of property taken by the Union Army based on his assertion that his former master Narcisse Prudhomme granted his enslaved laborers "rights of property."[313] And the fact that it had been taken from his dwelling made was important. Historian Dylan Penningroth argues that the home—in his description the dwellings, the yard, and the garden—served as an enslaved person's "locus of authority over property."[314] Yet still, Lacase lived with the possibility that his "property," even the dwelling itself, could be taken at any point. Using money earned from hiring his time, Thomas Jones (while still enslaved) purchased three small houses, all of which were under the name of a white man and so-called friend. Jones learned the hard way that a "slave cannot hold property," as the white man withheld this property from Jones even

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[311] Dylan Penningroth has shown the social relations and negotiations that lay beneath the claims to property made by the enslaved. Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Legal historians have shown that the enslaved brought property cases to court throughout American history, yet it is still undetermined how widely experienced this was. See, for example, Laura F. Edwards, *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[312] Dangerfield Hunter Will, VHS.

[313] Claim of Cerephin Lacase, 1876; Natchitoches Parish, LA; Southern Claims Commission Approved Claims, 1871-1880, National Archives, accessed at fold3.com.

[314] Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk*, 104.

once he was free.[315] The context within which enslaved people improved their homes through handmade furniture and non-essential domestic items, then, was in fact different from that of other non-elite homes, even if the dwelling or goods within it resembled one another.

Supplementing one's sparse home with domestic goods and handmade furniture, however crude the pieces, improved living conditions and combatted the limitations placed on the home lives of the enslaved. Of course, such improvements were not always possible. The grueling nature of slave labor likely left many without the time or energy to supplement their sparse furnishings. Millie Randall put it bluntly, "Us have jes' old plank beds and no furniture."[316] If one wanted furniture beyond a rope bed and a couple chairs on the plantation Richard Orford lived on, one had to make it oneself.[317] Louis Hughes recounted that his owner provided each slave dwelling with only one bed and a plain table; any seating, most often benches, enslaved people made themselves.[318] Skilled enslaved laborers sometimes provided the furniture for slave homes. Carey Davenport was lucky enough to have a carpenter father, who was allowed to use leftover lumber to make furniture, including a box for storing clothing.[319] Charlie Pye remembered his owner hiring out carpenters from other plantations to make furniture, which included rope-bottom beds, benches, and a home-made table, but there were "very few if any real chairs found in the slave homes."[320] (Figure 3.1) Andrew Moody proudly noted that his

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[315] Jones, *Experience and Personal Narrative of Uncle Tom Jones,* 27.
[316] Millie Randall, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 3, 227.
[317] Richard Orford, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4 pt 3, 151.
[318] Louis Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom: The Institution of Slavery as Seen on the Plantations and in the Home of the Planter* (Milwaukee, Wis.: South Side Printing Company, 1897), 26.
[319] Carey Davenport, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 1, 283.
[320] Charlie Pye, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 3, 185.

family made rawhide chairs, a luxury enabled by the practice of keeping skin of the head of any cattle they had to kill.[321] While cataloguing furniture in 2012 at the Richmond Plantation in Natchez, Mississippi, a team of three decorative arts scholars and one historian discovered two well-kept raw-hide, slat-back, plantation-made chairs in the Main house basement (one of the "slave spaces" of the main house). These chairs were likely just two of many made by and for the hundreds of enslaved people owned by the Marshall family. (Figure 3.2)

The oral histories and writings of the formerly enslaved often recount how mothers, sisters, and other women used the space of the home to combat the harsh realities of slavery by creating small material comforts. Harriet Jacobs claimed that her grandmother supplied "all my comforts, spiritual or temporal."[322] Frederick Douglass declared of his grandmother's loving home: "it was a noble structure, admirably adapted to promote the comforts and conveniences of its inmates."[323] While these women were not always able to protect their families and homes, they still provided comfort to their families and kin even under the limited time allowed for personal matters. Labor was not confined to duties assigned by an overseer or owner; a common refrain in slave narratives is the long hours that black women worked into the night. Charles T. Walker remembered the adult family members working "as long as they could see, and were usually up cooking and mending for the coming day."[324] James B. Curry's mother "would sit down by her lightwood fire, and sew and sleep alternately, often till the light began to streak in

[321] Andrew Moody, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 3, 116.
[322] Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, Mass.: Published for the Author, 1861), 19.
[323] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 37.
[324] Silas Xavier Floyd, *Life of Charles T. Walker, D.D.* (Nashville, 1902), 26.

the east."[325] Mary F. McCray related that she loved to sew, knit, and quilt, but could only do so at night after working all day on the plantation.[326] Some owners tasked enslaved women with weaving or spinning after returning from the fields; Emmaline Heard remembered that, "Until midnight, the spinning wheels could be heard humming in the slave cabins."[327] For these women who were tasked with work after the sun went down, the time for making and mending was limited. Enslaved people were given minimal bedding, clothing, and blankets, making time spent making such objects extremely important for the health and comfort. Charlie Pye, a former slave on a plantation in Columbus, Georgia, noted that quilting parties were held at various points of the year, bringing together every enslaved individual to help make bedding for one another.[328] (Figure 3.3) Activities such as quilting can also be understood as artistic expression.[329] In many cases, women continued to work after a full day of labor to provide their dwellings with a level of comfort. Francis Fedric, a former slave, recalled seeing many enslaved women "work all night long, husking Indian corn to put into cribs."[330] That little extra material comfort by enslaved women is indicative of the limited but real control enslaved people had over their own homes. (Figure 3.4)

And for many enslaved women and men, home was intimately connected with family. Although privacy and protection was not possible for the enslaved, still many associated the idea and space of home with family or kin. Harriet Jacobs reflected on the

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[325] James B. Curry, "Narrative of James Curry, A Fugitive Slave," *The Liberator* (January 10, 1840).
[326] S.J. McCray, *Life of Mary F. McCray, Born and Raised a Slave in the State of Kentucky* (Limo, Ohio, 1898), 8.
[327] Emmaline Heard, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 2, 149.
[328] Pye, WPA Slave Narrative Project, 187.
[329] Gladys Marie Fry, *Stitched from the Soul: Slave Quilting in the Ante-Bellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).
[330] Francis Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America* (London, 1863), 7.

hard life of her grandmother, who witnessed all of her children sold away from her. Her grandmother was freed and able "[b]y perseverance and unwearied industry" to become "mistress of a snug little home, surrounded with the necessaries of life."[331] Yet for her grandmother, for Jacobs, and for so many more enslaved women and men, it was never truly a happy home without her children. Jacobs noted that her grandmother was never fully content with her home and its comforts, but she "would have been happy could her children have shared them with her."[332] Home and family were conjoined for enslaved people as much as for white Americans. Formerly enslaved people often used the two words interchangeably, as when Archibald Grimké remarked that, "our dear little home was broken up."[333] For Grimké, the family within a dwelling made that space a home, and when that family was broken, so was home.

The presence or absence of family often determined how an enslaved person remembered their dwelling. The domestic spaces of many enslaved people were not filled with family. For Thomas Jones, snatched from his loving home and "put into a circle of cold, selfish, cruel hearts," he lived "through weary years of suffering…save that which hope of a better, happier future gives even to the desolate bondman."[334] The future Jones looked towards was in home: "My heart yearned to have a home, if it was only the wretched home of the unprotected slave, to have a wife to love me and to love."[335] This would not be a free home, but there could be a possibility of making home in slavery if loved ones were there. Even in freedom, if family was not present, a home could not be.

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[331] Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861), 28.
[332] Ibid.
[333] "Memoirs of Archibald H. Grimké," Folder 47, Box 39-2, Archibald H. Grimké Papers, Moorland-Springarn Research Center, Howard University.
[334] Jones, *Experience and Personal Narrative of Uncle Tom Jones,* 10.
[335] Ibid., 22–23.

Harriet Tubman, after escaping to freedom, felt intensely that "my home after all was down in de old cabin quarter, wid de ole folks, and my brudders and sisters."[336] This sentiment is echoed in many slave narratives, including that of Lewis Clarke who equated family, freedom, and home. Speaking of his brother Cyrus, Clarke noted that, "He had a wife, who was a free woman, and consequently he had a home."[337] Still, many looked towards something better in the future; Thomas Jones called out to God to "guide me soon to a free home with my beloved family."[338]

The absence of family and inadequacy of material conditions, in other words the absence of home feeling, were motivators for freedom. Walter Hawkins reflected on "the hard earth on which he slept, and the deprivation of calling himself his own" as "the forces which made him reflect…and lay his plans to be his own master."[339] Returning to his old dwelling after months of living with his owner in western free states, Josiah Henson looked around at the squalid conditions he had for so long considered normal and "sat down and deliberated upon the best plan to adopt for my next proceedings." No longer could Henson think that this dwelling with "its earth floor, its filth, and its numerous occupants" was home, especially after discovering his mother had died in his absence. (Figure 3.5) Realizing that "every tie which had ever connected me with this place was broken," Henson looked to freedom and hoped for a free, comfortable home

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[336] Sarah H. Bradford, *Harriet: The Moses of Her People* (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Son, 1886), 31–32.
[337] Lewis Garrad Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke, During a Captivity of More Than Twenty-Five Years, Among the Algerines of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian Sates of America, Dictated by Himself* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1845), 49.
[338] Jones, *Experience and Personal Narrative of Uncle Tom Jones,* 27.
[339] S.J. Celestine Edwards, *From Slavery to a Bishopric, or, The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada* (London: Kensit, 1891), 47.

filled with family.[340] The reverse was equally true: only with free homes could freedom become reality. Solomon Northup described the influence of domestic life on the meaning of freedom for enslaved people, who understood that a privilege of freedom was "that is would secure to them the enjoyment of domestic happiness."[341] He mused on the terrible plight of Patsey: "Patsey's life…was one long dream of liberty…To dwell where the black man may work for himself—live in his own cabin…was a blissful dream of Patsey's."[342] Liberty and a self-governing home: each needed the other to be realized.

Writers of slave narratives recognized how they could, using language, make clear the inhumanity of limiting enslaved people's creation and maintainence of autonomous private spaces. Henry Bibb expressed his belief that, in this way, American slaves were significantly worse off than slaves of other eras: "I was in a far worse state than Egyptian bondage; for they had houses and land."[343] In the antebellum US South, where black Americans were assumed by law and culture to be enslaved, the dwellings of black Americans in the antebellum South could never be truly free, safe, or secure. The white woman Martha Browne, writing anonymously from the point of view of an enslaved woman, argued that slavery takes every free choice away from enslaved people, including the most basic "liberty of choosing a home."[344] Solomon Northup never referred to an enslaved dwelling he was forced to occupy as his home; sometimes he called a dwelling "my cabin," but rarely did he connect the space with himself, instead referring to his slave dwelling as "the slave hut of Edwin Epps."[345] The only space that

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[340] Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: Arthur D. Phelps, 1849), 31.
[341] Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave,* 260.
[342] Ibid.
[343] Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, 29.
[344] Martha Griffith Browne, *Autobiography of a Female Slave* (New York: E. O. Jenkins, 1856), 171.
[345] Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 217; 288.

was truly his own—the only dwelling that was his home—was in Saratoga, New York, from which he had been lured away from his "home and family, and liberty."[346] Home, family, and freedom were connected, and slavery limited black women and men from fully realizing any of them.

As is obvious from the writings of the formerly enslaved, home held sometimes contradictory meanings, took innumerable material forms, and was immensely significant in both the lived experience of slavery and the dreams of future freedom. Slave homes took on additional import beyond the private lives of the enslaved in the very public debates about the institution of slavery in the antebellum United States. Recognizing the potency of home to readers, pro- and anti-slavery writers utilized the slave home to argue for their divergent viewpoints. Both sides focused on the physical and moral qualities of slave homes, though each came to vastly different conclusions. Anti-slavery activists depicted slave dwellings as cramped, unclean, and dilapidated spaces that could never inculcate Victorian morals. Theodore Dwight Weld's *Slavery as It Is* contained a large chart—entitled "DWELLINGS.THE SLAVES ARE WRETCHEDLY SHELTERD AND LODGED"—with twelve different descriptions of the horrid living conditions of enslaved people throughout the South.[347] Still, many anti-slavery writers argued that enslaved women, in particular, were able to combat the limiting morality of slave homes and practice virtuous lives. Slave homes, then, were sites of both oppression (slavery limited the possibilities of inculcating morality) and resistance (even in the face of limitations, women were able to instill morality).

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[346] Ibid., 34.
[347] Theodore Dwight Weld, *Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 43–44.

Perhaps no other literary genre so seamlessly employed the abolitionist interest in slave homes than the socially conscious domestic novel. Popularized in the 1830s, domestic literature focused on issues faced by women, as female readers tended to be the audience. It centered stories in the home and on families, often employing melodrama to intensify emotional responses. Lydia Maria Child helped establish the genre in the late 1820s with her female-centered novels and functional domestic manuals. At the height of her fame, Child began writing scathing anti-slavery tracts, many of which continued to appeal to women.[348] Child combined the female-centered writing and issues of domestic literature with her stance against slavery, thereby laying the roots for the rise of socially conscious domestic fiction in the 1850s, most importantly the 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Employing the form and style of domestic fiction to discuss the horrors of slavery was incredibly effective, in part because it brought slavery into the home in two ways. First, this novel brought slavery into the parlors of white and black northerners who had not experienced the institution first hand. For northerners reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, these "life-like home scenes" became the real thing.[349] Second, it showed how slave holders did not recognize or respect the sanctity, security, or health of slave homes. For anti-slavery activists, over-crowded dwellings were a symbol of the deleterious effects of the lack of privacy in slave dwellings. The one-room cabin, filled to capacity with inhabitants, lacking any comforts and barely providing the necessity of shelter, became a breeding ground for immorality.[350] And even

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[348] For example, Child published the explicitly antiracist two-volume *History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations* in 1835.
[349] "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *The National Era,* November 18, 1852.
[350] For example, Lewis Garrard Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke…* (Boston: David H. Ela, Printer, 1845), 74; Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth, a Northern Slave, Emancipated from Bodily Servitude by the State of New York, in 1828* (Boston: J. B. Yerrinton and Son, Printers, 1850),

if the cabin was the possession of Uncle Tom, it and the family within could quickly and easily be stolen from him even by a "kindly" and beloved owner. Stowe and other anti-slavery writers argued that good, Christian, Victorian homes were impossible under slavery, a point that reinforced the inhumanity of slavery.

Abolitionists argued that the cause of rampant immorality among the enslaved came not from a natural propensity to sin but from the circumstances of slavery. The lack of privacy in slave dwellings, for anti-slavery writers, most often related to how the confining physical space of slave dwellings left little room for bodily privacy, and therefore bred immorality. One-room cabins, especially those that housed more than one family, were often crowded spaces with very little privacy. These were not the only separate building structures of enslaved people; the double-pen house—a rectangular building separated by a chimney or hallway, thus creating two separate dwelling spaces—was one of the many other types of slave housing. But the one-room cabin was a common building type for enslaved people, and thus provided anti-slavery writers a clear image of how slavery was inhumane and immoral.[351] This single-room structure was one of the many outrages of slavery, serving as a symbol of the immorality that slavery supposedly bred within the enslaved. Anti-slavery writers discussed the ways that slavery and those who supported it forced enslaved men and women into immoral situations in order to preserve and grow the institution.[352] Sex outside of marriage was rampant not because of the inherent immorality of black people, but because the institution of slavery

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14–15; Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 102.

[351] Ellen Brass, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Arkansas Narratives*, vol. 2, pt. 1, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 246. Cyrus Bellus, *WPA Slave Narrative Project*, *Arkansas Narratives*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 142.

[352] See, for example, Weld, *Slavery as It Is,* 43–44. Numerous slave narratives also include references to the immorality of slave homes.

disallowed marriage and encouraged the separation of families for the financial benefit of whites. Theft was rampant in slave communities not because black people were naturally unethical, but because the destitute living conditions forced upon them required it to live.

This lack of privacy prevented the enslaved from having true Victorian homes, a belief that permeated many slave narratives and other anti-slavery writings. Black writers, like Lewis Clarke, echoed these tropes that such overcrowding encouraged sexual immorality, while Frederick Douglass noted that sleeping apartments or dwellings had "little regard to comfort or decency" as they required all—male and female, young and old—to "drop down upon the common clay floor."[353] Harriet Beecher Stowe, for instance, evinced deep concern over the sanctity of the slave home and its violation as one of the most obvious evils of slavery. In an 1852 companion book to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for example, British anti-slavery writer John Passmore Edwards hesitated in describing the domestic life of former slave Moses Roper, determining that, "slaves have no home."[354] Edwards, a white British journalist, imposed white, Victorian conceptions of family and home on those in slavery. The nineteenth-century home was a nearly sacred space where values were taught, strengthened, and exhibited for others to see. Yet slave homes could not consistently provide the hearth that Victorian society demanded. In this way, Edwards argued, slave owners denied enslaved people the potential to lived happy, full lives (as determined by Victorian mores). Frederick Douglass also argued that slavery denied children the important hearth of home, declaring that "the domestic hearth, with its holy lessons and precious endearments, is

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[353] Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke*, 74; Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 102.
[354] John Passmore Edwards, *Uncle Tom's Companions: Or, Facts Stranger Than Fiction. A Supplement to Uncle Tom's Cabin: Being Startling Incidents in the Lives of Celebrated Fugitive Slaves* (London: Edwards and Co., 1852), 144.

abolished in the case of a slave-mother and her children." Yet Douglass's emotionally laden statement suggests that enslaved people, too, deserved the privilege of family and home, thereby underscoring his belief in the significance of home for enslaved people and the immoral limitations that slavery placed on their homes.[355]

Yet even if slavery stripped the domestic hearth from slave homes, abolitionists made clear that this was not caused by inhabitants. Women, in particular, were connected with the hearth and home, and abolitionist literature argued that even though enslaved women were placed under horrific constraints, they still were able to exude a virtuous aura in slave homes. While white abolitionists focused on the pitiful image of the slave mother ripped from her children, black abolitionists balanced this perspective with personal recollections of the inherent true womanhood of enslaved mothers, sisters, and grandmothers.[356] The importance of this observation cannot be overstated; mid-nineteenth-century literature privileged personal experience of an event or action so as to prove an author's authority on the subject.[357] Having been a part of the destructive system of slavery, they had personally experienced the extreme lengths that enslaved women went to make their homes as comfortable and as moral as possible. And they connected these women's pursuits to their inherent moral superiority, playing into and reframing

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[355] Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 48.

[356] Harriet Beecher Stowe's claim that, "The worst abuse of slavery is its outrage on the family" is indicative of the white abolitionist focus on familial damage and separation over enslaved women's techniques of resistance to slavery's harmful ways. Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (London, 1853), 323.

[357] Many anti- and pro-slavery novels of the 1850s begin by establishing the author's personal observation and authority on the subject presented. For example: William Wells Brown, *Clotelle: Or, The President's Daughter* (London: Partridge & Oakey, 1853); Mary B. Harlan, *Ellen, or the Chained Mother, and Pictures of Kentucky Slavery Drawn From Real Life* (Cincinnati: Applegate, 1855); Richard Hildreth, *The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive* (Boston, Mass.: Tappan and Whittemore, 1853); Randolph J. Thornton, *Cabin and Parlor; or, Slaves and Masters* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1852); Caroline E. Rush, *The North and South; or, Slavery and Its Contrasts, A Tale of Real Life* (Philadelphia: Crissy and Markley, 1852).

Victorian gender norms. In discussing the uncomfortable and crowded nature of slave homes, Francis Fedric argued that, "the natural modesty and delicacy of the women thus huddled together; every possible effort being exerted, under such circumstances, to preserve appearances—an unchaste female slave being very rarely found."[358] Enslaved women who sinned were forced to do so by white men, often their owners, a counter to pro-slavery advocates' position that enslaved people's immorality stemmed from their natural inferiority, which needed to be rectified by the beneficent institution of slavery. Henry Bibb adamantly defended enslaved people's morality, claiming that it is the slaveholder who was "the keeper of a house or houses of ill-fame."[359]

The cult of true womanhood argued that American women were the moral center of the nation. Only women could raise children to be good, productive citizens. Yet this cult was restricted to white women only, thereby barring black women from claiming their rights (however limited) as true women. Black abolitionists understood the racialized nature of this ideology, tapping into and manipulating the language of true womanhood to include black women and thereby bolster their arguments against slavery. If enslaved women were, in fact, true women capable of maintaining their homes and their purity, if they were, in other words, civilized women, then those women did not deserve to be shackled in a system meant to "civilize" them. Many of those formerly enslaved men and women who discussed home so fervently in their narratives—like Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, and Thomas Jones—were doing so not only as a

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[358] Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky,* 8.
[359] Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: Published by the Author, 1849), 38.

record of their lives but as a part of the abolitionist movement, and focused in part on the slave home as a way of arguing for the destruction of the institution.

Pro-slavery writers were determined to combat this circulating anti-slavery literature that argued enslavers denied the rights to comfortable, safe, and private spaces, and they did so by using the domestic novel, among other literary forms like agricultural periodicals. Pro-slavery writers hoped to satiate the growing number of Americans questioning the institution of slavery by showing them that the enslaved had better lives and more to gain from slavery than freedom. Instead of picturing the horrors of the slave cabin, pro-slavery writers used the themes of the domestic novel to argue that slavery produced positive benefits for black homes and families. A flood of pro-slavery literary responses came in the wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and these writers used the same domestic genre to make the case against abolition using the slave home as a key trope. Whereas abolitionists described slaves homes as dirty, depraved, and dilapidated, pro-slavery writers presented slave cabins as comfortable and clean. In particular, they compared these slave homes with the destitute dwellings of free blacks in the North. Pro-slavery advocates had for some time regarded this as an effective strategy for defending slavery, and as more publications flooded the northern market seeking to show the true barbarity of the institution, pro-slavery writers sought to expose what they saw as the barbarity of black liberty and free labor.[360] They compared the supposedly comfortable slave cabins of the South to the decrepit and disgusting hovels of free black northerners and working-class Europeans. Lucien Chase's 1854 *English Serfdom and American*

[360] For more on the condemnation of wage labor as justification for slavery, see Wilfred Carsel, "The Slaveholders' Indictment of Northern Wage Slavery," *Journal of Southern History* 6, no. 4 (November 1940): 504–20.

Slavery clearly laid out the pro-slavery position that conditions of the English working-class were significantly worse than that of enslaved laborers in the US South.[361]

In response to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Charles Jacobs Peterson (under the pseudonym J. Thornton Randolph) sought to convey the benefits of slavery to black Americans. Early in the novel *The Cabin and Parlor; or, Slaves and Masters*, Peterson painted a picture of a central character's cabin, that of Uncle Peter, which was "neatly white-washed…had, besides the vegetable plot in the rear, a neat little flower garden in front…[and was] spotlessly clean."[362] When two of the other main enslaved characters escape for the North, they found dreadful living conditions in a "Black Suburb":

> you enter a dirty, narrow alley, where the close atmosphere almost sicken you; and now you are, at last, in a Northern negro quarter. The houses are mostly old, tumble-down wooden structures, two stories high, and black with age, or brick dwellings with more capacity and pretension, dirty beyond imagination, and inhabited by ten or a dozen families each. Scattered about the middle of the narrow street are piles of decaying vegetables, with here and there an old shoe, or perhaps a ragged straw hat, half sticking out of the reeking mass.[363]

Even though, as historians have shown, a common slave cabin in the antebellum US South was relatively similar to dwellings of poor white Americans and industrial and agricultural laborers throughout the western world in this period, pro-slavery proponents falsely emphasized the superiority of enslaved living conditions.[364] *Cabin and Parlor* was

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[361] Lucien Chase, *English Serfdom and American Slavery* (Philadelphia: H. Long & Bro. 1854).
[362] J. Thornton Randolph, *The Cabin and Parlor; or, Slaves and Masters* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1852), 24.
[363] Ibid., 123.
[364] Scholars who have shown similarities between enslaved living conditions and those of poor white workers in the United States and Europe include Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 116; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 150; William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 177–8.

one of many novels that sought to, as the abolitionist newspaper *The National Era* put it, "present Slavery under an attractive aspect" by emphasizing the comfort of dwellings, which enslaved individuals were deeply connected.[365]

Of course, anti-slavery writers concurrently presented narratives wherein comfortable slave dwellings resulted from licentious and immoral advances of slave owners. Harriet Jacobs, for instance, described the perverse pleasure her owner took in raping her and stealing her virtue, tempting her with a comfortable house that would serve as a site for such actions. The desire for a comfortable home runs through slave narratives, and even Jacobs muses about how delightful a comfortable home would be, relating a story about an enslaved family that "had a comfortable home of their own, parents and children living together."[366] Yet all the comfort of that home was destroyed when the family was separated. Jacobs eventually chose an impossibly small, cramped attic over a spacious, comfortable home since it meant the possibility of reclaiming her virtue and building a free, safe, secure home for her family. For Jacobs, living in slavery and sin was a "cage of obscene birds," while the cramped attic promised the possibility of freedom and some comfort in the voices of her children.[367] More important than material comforts were freedom and a true home. For Jacobs, the "dream of my life…[was to] sit with my children in a home of my own….however humble."[368]

Pro-slavery writers, then, had to combat these narratives conflating comfortable slave dwellings with the degenerate behavior of white men. The belief that the appearance of improved living conditions could, on some level, assuage anti-slavery

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[365] "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *The National Era,* November 18, 1852.
[366] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* 77.
[367] Ibid., 81.
[368] Ibid., 302.

criticism prompted advocates not only to give advice but to prove the comfort of slave dwellings. Pro-slavery advocates wanted those opposed to slavery to see the "truth." As Richard Arnold wrote in an 1849 letter, "I wish an Abolitionist could see the care & attention bestowed upon our Negroes."[369] Part of the actual seeing, it was believed, could be accomplished through fiction, which in the mid nineteenth century emphasized an author's reliability and the authenticity of their descriptions. They accomplished this through crafting realistic pictures, influenced by new visual technologies like photography.[370] This technology supposedly produced a more truthful representation of its subjects, and thus writers seeking to prove the veracity of their perspective employed literary techniques that replicated this process. Anti-slavery novelists, like Stowe, were especially adept at this, using their pen to, as the "Literary Notices" section of *The National Era* put it in April 1852, draw the "vividest word-painting" that "abounds alike with quaint, delicious humor, and the most heart-searching pathos."[371] The "word-painting" of novelists could, it was believed, show the world as it was, thereby making novels a persuasive genre. Pro-slavery novelists quickly picked up on this technique, reiterating their authority and reliability in order to make their own word-paintings more persuasive. Most pro-slavery domestic novels included prefatory declarations of the

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[369] Letter of Richard Arnold, M.D., in *Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin* 42 (1928), 170, quoted in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1929), 184.

[370] As literary scholar Shelly Jarenski notes, nineteenth-century writers sought to "harness the non-linguistic immediacy of visual forms," changing not only what but how the writers told their stories. Shelly Jarenski, "Narrating Vision, Visualizing Nation: The American Nineteenth Century After 1839" (PhD diss, Loyola University Chicago, 2007), v. See also, Jarenski, *Immersive Words: Mass Media, Visuality, and American Literature, 1839–1893* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015); Susan S. Williams, *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

[371] "Literary Notices," *The National Era* (Washington, D.C.), April 22, 1852.

author's personal observation and "strict adherence to truth," meant to prove the veracity of the glorified images of slavery seen in the pages that followed.[372]

Even as pro-slavery advocates denied enslaved individuals the right to private and secure homes, they projected their belief in the goodness that slavery bestowed upon black homes. Demonstrating the goodness of slavery by showing the comfort of and inhabitants' attachment to slave cabins became a common tactic used by pro-slavery advocates, one that concealed their efforts to deny home rights and family to the enslaved. In what might today be called an advice column, pro-slavery ideologues took to southern agricultural journals to discuss the most effective management techniques. Much space was dedicated to improving enslaved living conditions, which anti-slavery activists railed against as inhumane. They advocated for the placement of slave dwellings in healthy locales, concerned as many nineteenth-century citizens were about miasmas.[373] By at least 1850, plantation management advisors recognized anti-slavery arguments, and sought to counter them by advising that slave families be given their own, relatively spacious dwellings to promote health and morality. Plantation management publications also advised that dwellings be a moderate size, large enough to house a family of enslaved laborers but not too large so as to be inefficient or costly.[374] An unnamed Tennessee minister noted in 1859 that, "no house, of what dimensions soever, can be comfortable if crowded. Morality is very directly involved here. The mingling of sexes or

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[372] Randolph, *The Cabin and Parlor,* 3.

[373] For more on the mid-nineteenth-century concern over miasmas, see, David S. Barnes, *The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-Century Struggle against Filth and Germs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

[374] Much archaeological evidence presents the case that slave dwellings were typically quite small. Leland Ferguson has argued that a dwelling's small size was perhaps a continuation of a distinctive West African architectural tradition, and while that might be true, the historical record seems to point us to the fact that this was a method of controlling and containing, as well as maximizing economics. Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground,* 68, 73.

the throwing of aliens and strangers together in the same house, without reference to the natural groupings of families, is fatal to most domestic virtues."[375] Of course, slave owners still sent new arrivals to a dwelling without the consent of those within.[376]

For slave owners, the improvement of slave housing was overwhelmingly about maintaining control and increasing efficiency, not instilling values. Still, pro-slavery advocates recognized the power in advocating moral and material improvements. It is unclear the extent to which this plantation management advice was actually implemented and what the true motivation was for it. Some expressed a paternalistic belief that it was their duty to provide decent housing. As one mother advised her slave-owning son, never allow "self interest [to] induce you to break the golden rule.... make their houses comfortable."[377] Another motivation was the belief that such domestic improvements would in fact increase productivity and thus profits for planters, meaning that the writers did in fact intend for readers to implement their advice. Additionally, pro-slavery advocates were motivated by the wish to at least *appear* concerned with the comfort and well-being of their enslaved laborers, even if the underlying motivation was not so altruistic. Agricultural editorials made clear the necessity of presenting enslaved living conditions as comfortable and well-constructed if pro-slavery ideologues were to combat abolitionist attacks. G. D. Harmon, an overseer in the Deep South, responded in 1857 to what he considered to be too-frequent discussion slave housing and management in southern periodicals:

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[375] *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South*, ed. James O. Breeden (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 135. For another example, see, Ibid., 121.
[376] When he arrived at his new "home," Charles Ball was sent to a random cabin like this. Charles Ball, *Fifty Years In Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: H. Dayton, 1859), 116.
[377] Betty Carter (Browne) to George Washington Bassett, 26 May 1816, Section 21, Bassett Family Papers, VHS.

> I very much regret that a Southern man will use such unguarded expressions in a Southern agricultural journal, and at a time, too, when the 'negro-worshippers at the North' are trying to move heaven and earth against the South, and will take every advantage possible, fair or unfair. If the above extract should, perchance, meet the eye of Greely, Beecher & Co., what a lamentable howl would be raised for the poor 'gentlemen of color' in the South, who were compelled to build their own houses at night, or on the *Sabbath!*... 'Bleeding Kansas' would, for the time, be forgotten, and all eyes turned to be the 'down-trodden Africans' of the South.

In this way, Harmon recognized the power of abolitionist attacks on slave homes. Whether focusing on labor conditions for building homes or the destitute state those homes took, anti-slavery writers had potent fodder in the image of the slave home. Both sides would continue to look to black homes as important points of debate, knowing home maintained such a significant place in the hearts and minds of Americans.

Home was a hybrid of the experienced and the imagined, the material and the ideological. Many enslaved women and men formulated ideas of home in relation to their white owners, but their conceptions were not identical. The possibility of separation from family and the constancy of surveillance, intrusion, and violence against their homes and bodies were unique factors that would never allow enslaved individuals' definition of home to be the same as that of free, white Americans. The malleable nature of home, however, did not lessen its influence on the actions and ideologies of enslaved people. Freedom would be real only through private, safe, secure homes. Once emancipation was a reality, then, black women and men throughout the US South immediately began seeking, building, and renovating homes to assert and maintain their freedom and their newly found rights.

CHAPTER FOUR

"The Castle of Your Independence":
Free Black Homes in the Postbellum South

A multigenerational family congregates in the parlor. The father rocks one of his daughters on a plush, elegant armchair, while two older children look on. A son holds a book with his arm slung casually over the chair back, as if taking a break from his studies to view the familial scene. To the left, a grandmother watches the father and children, smiling at the tableau. As does the mother, who stands near iron stove, a luxury for most households at the time, perhaps making tea as a kettle whistles.[378] In the background two young people converse privately, perhaps exchanging words of affection. Emblems of prosperity abound: comfortable furniture, well-made clothing, window hangings. Two objects hanging on the wall—President Lincoln's portrait and a banjo—alert the viewer that this is not simply a scene of any middle-class American family. Placing the "Great Emancipator" next to an African musical instrument demonstrated that free black families would not (and in some ways could not) leave behind their enslaved past, that elements of this past would be materially present for decades to come.[379]

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[378] George W. McDaniel maintains that even with the replacement of open fireplaces for cooking, the hearth—whether stove or fireplace—continued to be the center of American homes into the twentieth century. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home: Preserving a People's Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 141.

[379] For decades after emancipation, Lincoln's visage was a staple on the walls of black families. A post-WWI illustration of a black soldier returning home from war includes Lincoln's portrait on the wall, indicating the continuation of this practice into the twentieth century. For more on Lincoln and American home decoration, see Harold Holzer, "Picturing Freedom: The Emancipation Proclamation in Art, Iconography, and Memory," in *The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views*, eds. Harold Holzer, Edna Greene Medford, and Frank J. Williams (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 83–136. For more on the African and African American cultural roots of the banjo, see Laurent Dubois, *Banjo: America's African Instrument* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

This vignette, placed at the center of Thomas Nast's lithograph entitled *Emancipation*, visualized what black families hoped would come of that event: the reunion of families, formal education, legal recognition of marriage, the acquisition of property, and realization of safe, private, comfortable homes. (Figure 4.1) Drawn by a white artist with a reputation for carelessly depicting racial issues, most scholars have focused on how *Emancipation* represents white, bourgeois values (like those held by Nast) imposed on newly freed black Americans.[380] This ignores the words and objects that black Americans left behind, artifacts that clearly demonstrate the importance of home to freedom and citizenship. Yet this image also subtly indicates the difficultly inherent in the emancipation process, for the past could not and would not be forgotten. Few free black dwellings and families would look like that pictured by Nast. By the turn of the twentieth century, W. E. B. Du Bois would note that while "[e]mancipation meant more or less of a change in home life for the freedmen," it still was "not violent change." In fact, in many free black homes, "the change was scarcely noticeable."[381] But this was not a universal statement, for even with severe social, legal, and economic restrictions, material improvements happened in many black homes. Nor does Du Bois's statement recognize a deeper, more meaningful change in black dwellings: with emancipation came the possibility of establishing homes with all the rights associated with it, regardless of one's enslaved past.

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[380] See, for example, Patricia Hills, "Cultural Racism: Resistance and Accommodation in the Civil War Art of Eastman Johnson and Thomas Nast," in *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture,* ed. Patricia Johnston (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 109–12; Fiona Deans Halloran, *Thomas Nast: The Father of Modern Political Cartoons* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 72–74; Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 84.

[381] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; III. The Home of the Country Freedmen," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 10 (October 1901): 535.

As black Americans sought to make the promises of freedom a reality, they looked to the schoolhouse, the ballot box, and the church as sites of change. But they also looked to one place they had, in slavery, placed so much hope: the free home. For recently freed and free-born black Americans, acquiring and maintaining homes, and land upon which to secure those homes, realized liberty's promises. Land and property ownership established the economic and social independence of black Americans. While home and land/property ownership were not necessarily linked, formerly enslaved individuals certainly connected the two. Truly autonomous private spaces, unlike slave homes, necessitated the ownership of land upon which the dwelling sat. As northern black activists made clear, the objects and activities of home demonstrated the transition from slavery to freedom, and proved black Americans' capacity for citizenship. Middle-class and elite black activists proscribed the acquisition of property even as the great majority of formerly enslaved individuals were far too poor to afford it. Still, even poor black southerners believed their domestic objects and dwellings would help finally establish the rights denied them under slavery. Slave owners had regarded black dwellings as spaces for housing property, spaces perpetually open to their surveillance and intrusion. Enslaved black women and men created spaces and moments of security and privacy, but these could be revoked at any minute. With freedom and the legal backing such a status seemed to confer, formerly enslaved Americans, to the degree their economic situation would allow, built homes to instill comfort, security, and privacy. In northern black newspapers and southern black homes, African Americans argued that the fruits of freedom, and the action needed to realize them, were not just public but private.

Public proclamations and personal stories reveal the discourse and lived experience of the free home in the half century after emancipation. From Maryland to South Carolina to Texas, recently freed black Americans established homes. Some migrated and purchased land; others remained on the plantation where they had been enslaved. Land ownership largely determined the extent of freedom as unfair labor contracts, ongoing surveillance and intrusion, and material continuities made many postbellum black homes more closely resemble slave dwellings than free homes. For many black southerners, free homes were as bad as, if not worse than, slave dwellings. Yet there was an undeniable difference between the two that black women and men expressed in their domestic lives as they used all available resources—from the law to secondhand china to firearms—to proclaim and maintain their homes as free.

Few historians have focused on the private endeavors of black Americans to make good on the promises of emancipation, and even fewer have connected the material changes in domestic life to the pursuit of greater freedoms.[382] This requires the use of multiple source bases, bringing together the archival and the archaeological. The typical areas of interest—including voting rights, education, church life, and the acquisition of property—were, for black Americans, in fact all related to the home. Indeed, the exceptional scholarship exploring the great desire for acquisition of land and property has overwhelmingly ignored that obvious connection between land, property, and home. Public pursuits were directly connected to private endeavors and spaces; each could not

[382] Historians like Noralee Frankel, who focus on the importance of family and land ownership to newly freed black Americans, still rarely recognize the centrality of home to that discussion. One noteworthy exception is Thavolia Glymph, whose examination of the significance of home as idea and space to black women across the transition from slavery to freedom greatly influenced this work. See Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999). Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

advance without the other. Examining the ideas, structures, objects, and images of free black dwellings after emancipation reveals the centrality of home to the meaning and experience of freedom. Indeed, we cannot expect to understand the aspirations, pursuits, successes, and failures of the black freedom struggle in the tumultuous periods of Reconstruction and Jim Crow without investigating what many black Americans believed was core to it.

For recently freed women and men throughout the American South, creating homes and establishing family within them was a central priority. This had been true for those who escaped the institution before official emancipation, yet the lingering possibility of re-enslavement had haunted the attempts of northern free blacks to create homes in the antebellum era. Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, and Frederick Douglass, among others, remarked that even in the free North, black homes were not truly theirs nor truly secure.[383] With the abolition of slavery, the possibility for all black Americans to build free lives and free homes was finally possible.

But there were many obstacles to making that reality: lack of money, disjointed families, and the anxiety of what day-to-day life in freedom actually looked like. Many enslaved individuals later remembered themselves or others feeling apprehensive when they recognized their freedom was genuine. For those who experienced emancipation as an announcement, there were a great number of ways such an announcement could be made, and what would follow was unknown. Some were forced to leave the place they considered home; Minerva Brady remembered that, "After us free dey turn us loose in de

[383] Sojourner Truth, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth, a Northern Slave* (Boston, 1850), 72; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston, 1861), 83–84; Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, Conn.: Park Publishing Company, 1881), 286.

woods and dat de bad time, 'cause most us didn't know where to turn."[384] Steven Williams similarly remembered that his owner simply came to his enslaved laborers "and he say, 'You all git, I mean git from here.' So we jes' scatters 'round, here and yonder, not knowin' zactly what to do."[385] Even those who put great hope and faith in the promises of freedom recognized the hardship emancipation would bring. As Margrett Nillin, a former slave in Palestine, Texas, put it in a 1938 interview: "In slavery I owned nothing and never owned anything. In freedom I own a home and raise a family. All this cause me worriment and in slavery I had no worriment, but I'll take the freedom."[386] Selina Grey, former slave of Mary Custis Lee, recounted the difficulties she had after freedom to her former mistress, but boldly declared that, "I am very happy that I have got a comfortable home of my own now."[387] A home of one's own: that was the possibility that freedom gave.

Home and family were central to black Americans' understanding of emancipation and their hopes for freedom. An 1866 reprint of an article entitled "Home and Love," which ran in the black Philadelphia newspaper *Christian Recorder*, declared that "our home in this life is with those we love best. It is where the heart is."[388] Riffing on the popular adage "Home is where the heart is," this short piece reflected a broader cultural belief that home and family were intertwined. But black women and men would first have to reassemble their families after decades of disunion. The massive forced

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[384] Minerva Bendy, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 1, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 69.
[385] Steve Williams, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 4, Federal Writer's Project, 181.
[386] Margrett Nillin, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, 153.
[387] Selina Gray to Mary Custis Lee, November 1872, Mary Custis Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society (VHS).
[388] "Home and Love," *Christian Recorder*, October 6, 1866.

migration of enslaved people from the Upper to Lower South began in earnest in the 1820s and continued through the beginnings of the Civil War.[389] This involuntary relocation ripped apart thousands of slave families, but the fragility of the slave family did not stop enslaved people from building strong connections within their kinship networks and beyond.[390] These networks would allow newly freed women and men to begin rebuilding their families after emancipation.[391]

Within a few years of emancipation, many black family structures mirrored those of white families, with two-parent households ostensibly headed by males. In postbellum rural Montgomery County, Maryland, black families were typically nuclear in structure, with both parents living in the family home.[392] On the other side of the South, in rural Ruttersville, Texas, by 1870 nearly 90% of black households were headed by a man; in Galveston, around 80% included a man as head of house. This compares to about 96% of white households in both areas. These numbers are rather remarkable considering that this census information was gathered only five years after emancipation, a point that reiterates the obvious importance of family to African Americans. White and black

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[389] As historian Adam Rothman has shown, this massive involuntary migration was possible only because of the happenstance convergence of the federal government's involvement in the expulsion of native Americans from the territory, the boom of cotton and sugar near the end of the eighteenth century (possible through inventions like Eli Whitney's cotton gin), and ample labor provided by slaves forcibly moved from the Upper to the Lower South. Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). The recent work of Edward E. Baptist reiterates the importance of innovations in cotton production to the expansion of slavery. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told* (New York: Basic Book, 2014).

[390] Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

[391] Advertisements for lost family members, which ran in newspapers across the South, reveal not only the pain of loss but the hope in reunion after emancipation. The work of historians Heather Andrea Williams reveals that very few of these ads were ever followed up with stories of reconciliation, leading us to question how many separated family members were actually able to find one another. Heather Andrea Williams, *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

[392] George W. McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources in Upper Western Montgomery County* (Barnesville, MD: Sugarloaf Regional Trails, 1979), 19–33.

households often included extended family as well, as seen in this late-century photograph of women representing six generations of one Selma, Alabama family. (Figure 4.2) Rarely, especially in the Deep South, had multiple generations of women been able to live together under slavery.[393]

As families reunited or new families formed, they needed homes in which to thrive in freedom. Home referred to multiple spaces and material incarnations for enslaved individuals, and this multi-layered understanding of home continued into freedom. Aspects of the communal nature of plantation living affected the postbellum home; it was the garden, yard, and place of worship, the kinship network as much as blood relatives. As argued in previous chapters, although most historians have focused on this communal and outdoor element of home, the dwelling itself was also key to home for enslaved people, and continued to be in freedom. Yet beliefs surrounding the Victorian home also infiltrated black individuals' concept of home. The nuclear family and single-family home became more popular, and comfort and cleanliness became points of pride. Although postbellum homes often included multiple generations of one family or extended kin networks, they were not the shared dwellings of slavery.[394] Owners had determined who lived where, and often on medium- and large-plantations throughout the South, multiple enslaved families would live under one roof.[395] With freedom, though,

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[393] Laurie A. Wilkie found that large families—comprised of multiple generations and extended family members—were the norm for tenants at Oakley Plantation in Louisiana. Laura A. Wilkie, *Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840-1950* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 73.

[394] Mark Reinberger, in his examination of sharecropping dwellings in the Georgia Piedmont, notes that, "shared dwellings were one of the aspects of slavery most emphatically avoided by free blacks." Mark Reinberger, "The Architecture of Sharecropping: Extended Farms of the Georgia Piedmont," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 9 (2003), 126.

[395] Even though an unnamed Tennessee minister and pro-slavery advocate advised in 1859 that, "the throwing of aliens and strangers together in the same house, without reference to the natural groupings of families, is fatal to most domestic virtues," slave owners continued to do just that, sending unknown

came the autonomy to decide exactly who would inhabit one's home. Freed people on the Levi Jordan plantation near Houston, Texas, abandoned dormitory-style housing on the plantation for single-family cabins, a clear indication of their refusal to live where and with whom their previous owner once demanded.[396] These additional layers of home meant that the structure and the people within it took on even greater meaning for freed people. They put their hope and effort in this construction of the physical dwelling and a good homelife so as to finally have real homes. In describing the newly built homes of freedpeople in the all-black town of Mitchelville, South Carolina, General Ormsby Mitchel (for whom the town was named) mentioned that the "houses are very comfortable and commodious structures," and that the black men and women commenced building "with all their heart. In fact nothing has ever taken such hold of them as this hope—the first they have ever had—of having homes of their own."[397]

Building homes refers not only the physical construction of dwellings, but also to the creation of a domestic sphere where Christian morals, American virtues, and western gender norms were instilled.[398] A *New York Times* report on Mitchelville clearly stated this connection, noting that in this new town, "The Negroes are to be made to build their own homes…as it is thought to be high time they should begin to learn what freedom

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persons to dwellings without the consent of those within. *Advice Among Masters: The Ideal in Slave Management in the Old South*, ed. James O. Breeden (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 135. When he arrived at his new "home," for example, Charles Ball was sent to a random cabin to live with people he did not know. Charles Ball, *Fifty Years In Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: H. Datyon, 1859), 116.

[396] Kenneth L. Brown and Doreen C. Cooper, "Structural Continuity in an African-American Slave and Tenant Community," *Historical Archaeology* 24, no. 4 (1990), 14.

[397] General Ormsby M. Mitchel, Private letter to the editor of the *New York Evening Post*, found at http://www.bcgov.net/mitchelville/documentation/more-than-a-refugee-camp/.

[398] For an excellent recent overview of nineteenth-century ideas and ideals of home, see Amy G. Richter, "Introduction," in *At Home in Nineteenth-Century America: A Documentary History,* ed. Amy G. Richter (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 1–10.

means by experience of self-dependence."[399] The home was a child's first school; as Revered F. F. Matthews noted in the *Christian Recorder*, "The home is the place where our education should begin."[400] Home was thus important not only for those who lived there, but for those who regarded it as the first frontier to better the lives of black Americans. Only by owning land, building houses, and establishing good home lives could black Americans hope to lift themselves out of a state of slavery.

Newly freed people appear to have perceived landownership in ways similar to other Americans, namely as a symbol and safeguard of liberty. Land and true freedom were bound together. The "most pressing of his problems," W. E. B. Du Bois argued in reference to free black Americans, was land, which was the "absolutely fundamental and essential thing to any real emancipation of the slaves."[401] Historians August Meier and Elliott Rudwick maintain that, to newly freed men and women, "freedom, respectability and getting ahead were inextricably associated with farming their own land."[402] Owning land gave one the opportunity for self-sufficiency, a goal that would provide not stability but more autonomy than otherwise possible. While even those black individuals who owned land often ended up working for white farmers to supplement their income, the ownership of land and the home on it gave black families a level of freedom that those living and working as sharecroppers and tenant farmers rarely felt.[403] Land and the home one built on it would secure freedom in a way little else could, and was directly tied to

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[399] "Our Port Royal Correspondence," *New York Times*, October 8, 1862.
[400] F. F. Matthews, "The Home, the School, and the Church as Factors in the Word of Education," *Christian Recorder*, February 26, 1885.
[401] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 601.
[402] August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 166.
[403] Only a few of the dozens of Maryland farmsteads surveyed by George McDaniel were able to subsist on only one source of income, requiring them to often work at nearby white-owned farms. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 191.

the acquisition of other civil rights. In 1871, Francis Ellen Watkins Harper enjoined a crowd of freedmen in Mobile, Alabama to, "Get land, every one that can, and as fast as you can. A landless people must be dependent upon the landed people. A few acres to till for food and a roof, however humble, over your head, are the castle of your independence, and when you have it you are fortified to act and vote independently whenever your interests are at stake."[404]

Additionally, owning land supplied the possibility of finally securing private, safe domestic spaces. Slave owners had denied the sanctity of private property and rights of home to enslaved people, a denial that black individuals recognized could (and did) easily continue in new oppressive labor and living systems like sharecropping and tenant farming. As new exploitative labor systems replaced slavery, they recognized the limitations placed on their newfound freedom, and understood that land ownership could counter them. Even those who rented looked forward to the real possibility of calling a plot their own. Some believed that owning land could put a black man on the same level as a white man, therefore giving a black family the rights to home that white southerners had racialized and denied them in the antebellum era. As A. R. Lightfoot indicated in an 1869 *De Bow's Review* article, "Every Negro who procured one of these [rented] patches, saw himself at once in the light of an independent planter, placed upon an equal footing with his former master, and, looking into the future, beheld himself a landed proprietor."[405] Purchasing the home of one's former master was perhaps the ultimate example of this, and multiple cases exist of such a reversal of fortunes, including the

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[404] George F. Bragg, *Men of Maryland* (Baltimore, MD: Church Advocate Press, 1914), 75.
[405] A. R. Lightfoot, "Conditions and Wants of the Cotton Raising States," *De Bow's Review* 6 (February 1869): 153.

Gaither/Howard house in Montgomery County, Maryland, and the McKee-Smalls house in Beaufort County, South Carolina.[406] As historian Thavolia Glymph perceptively notes, "In the making of freedom, the destruction of slavery and the destruction of planter homes were of a piece."[407] But in purchasing the planter's home and making it one's own, freed men and women made an even greater statement: not only was slavery to be forever dead, so was the social structure that placed white above black.

Black Americans understood the ownership of land and the creation of truly free homes as connected. Historian Dylan Penningroth asserts that, in areas of the South where plantation workforces had been relatively stable in the 1850s, freedpeople claimed parcels of land that they defined as "home."[408] As Senator Blanche K. Bruce, one of the nation's first black senators, declared in 1880, "If we, as a people, would acquire the self-respectful, independent, conservative, resolute qualities that distinguish American citizens from all others, we must find the nursery of such qualities in American homes. The first and prime duty of every colored citizen & the head of a family in reality or in expectancy & is to purchase and pay for land enough upon which to build and furnish a home."[409] And so, along with the establishment of schools, black middle-class and elite activists (most northern and most male) advised newly freed southerners to save money and buy land, but not to stop there. They must also build homes. Without homes, land or freedom meant little. When Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, organizer of the 1870s Exoduster Movement to Kansas, noticed that recently freed people "had personal liberty but no

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[406] Maryland Historical Trust, MD Inventory of Historic Properties, "Gaither/Howard Houses," Inventory No. M-23-08, 1; United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, Robert Smalls House," 2–3.
[407] Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 106.
[408] Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 158.
[409] B. K. Bruce, "Possibilities of Christmas," *Christian Recorder*, December 23, 1880.

homes," he promptly began "his 'mission,' as he called it, urging the blacks to save their earnings and buy homes and little plots of land as a first step toward achieving industrial independence."[410]

The creation of homes and related acquisition of property, they argued, would help demonstrate black (male) capacity for citizenship. Black activists believed that the desire to own property was an American value that recently enslaved people (being legally barred from owning property) needed to demonstrate as a means of showing their capacity for rights, including the rights of privacy and protection of home. More than any other, land was considered the "ultimate property purchase."[411] But it was not only land that was essential; it was homes on it. Land would help secure citizenship, and the homes upon it would serve as a center for which to improve their lives. Hallie Brown, writing in the early twentieth century, related multiple stories of strong, proud, successful black women, including that of Anna Elizabeth Hudlun who, with her husband Joseph, "realized that to become substantial citizens they must acquire property, and they owned the first house, a little five room cottage, contracted for and built by colored owners." This home would become, as Brown put it, "the Mecca toward which the old pioneers and the strangers alike wended their way for social life and civic betterment."[412] The rights of citizenship were to be fostered in the home; indeed, as Senator Bruce expressed it, "We cannot adequately conceive of American citizenship apart from American homes."[413] Without such a demonstration, white supremacists could argue that black

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[410] Walter L. Fleming, "'Pap' Singleton: The Moses of the Colored Exodus," *American Journal of Sociology* 15 (July 1909): 62.
[411] Debra A. Reid, "Furniture Exempt from Seizure: African-American Farm Families and Their Property in Texas, 1880s-1930s," *Agricultural History* 80, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 338.
[412] Hallie Q. Brown, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (Xenia, OH: Aldine Publishing Company, 1926), 142.
[413] Bruce, "Possibilities of Christmas."

Americans were incapable and inferior, unwilling to live according to the traditional American way of life. As the Reverend R. L. Ridgee stated, "There is one thing sire, negros must break up and commence getting homes of their own. So long as he cultivates the white man's land, he and his children will be the white man's slaves."[414] Ridgee urged newly freed people to establish *households*—units of production and, increasingly, consumption—outside the purview of white men, but he also meant for them to establish *homes* outside the purview of white men. Building private and protected homes—building autonomous private spaces—was just as necessary as establishing a household if one wanted to be truly free.

As funds became available, black men and women purchased land and built homes. By 1900, there were 179,418 black farm owners in the South, a number that would grow to 212,365 by 1920.[415] In his 1911 memoir, I. E. Lowery included the number of landowning families and the monetary amount of property to show the progress of black Americans: "In January, 1866, the negroes left the old plantation with nothing—absolutely nothing… But recent statistics show a marvelous accumulation of property for a period of forty years… They own 137,000 farms and homes, which consist of 40,000,000 acres. These farms and homes are valued at $725,000,000."[416] The inclusion of such statistics in postbellum black memoirs and other texts was fairly common, a means of showing racial progress alongside individual prosperity.[417] Black women were active participants in this pursuit as well, owning substantial property in the

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[414] A. L. Ridgee, "Bad Treatment South," *Christian Recorder*, July 8, 1886.
[415] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 187.
[416] I.E. Lowery, *Life on the Old Plantation in Ante-Bellum Days, or, A Story Based on Facts* (Charleston: The State Co., 1911), 161.
[417] Other postbellum texts that include such statistics include Annie L. Burton, *Memories of Childhood's Slavery Days* (Boston, Mass.: Ross Publishing Company, 1909), 66; Harry S. Cummings, "Address," (1904), 6, MS 2961, Papers of Harry S. Cummings, Maryland Historical Society.

Lower South by the early 1870s. Hannah Perryman, a former slave, owned multiple homesteads on eight acres in Polk County by 1874.[418] At least two women purchased plots in the all-black community of Jonesville, Maryland, both of whom likely used the pension of their veteran husbands to acquire the land.[419]

If able to secure a pension, black veterans and widows had a greater chance of purchasing land than other newly freed people after the Civil War. Benjamin Ross, born in 1883 in Maryland, recalled that his father, who escaped to Union lines and joined the army, received a pension with which he purchased a 100-acre farm in 1887. His wife, perhaps using her own savings or her husband's pension money, bought an adjoining plot of farmland, increasing their property to an impressive 200 acres.[420] Most formerly enslaved people needed time to accumulate enough money. Some, however, had money during the time of slavery. As early as 1866, James Wilson, Sr. purchased 34 ¼ acres in the soon-to-be black Maryland township of Ben's Creek for the large sum of $962. While he likely saved a good portion of his pay acquired as a free waterman and farmer, the large sum suggests he had some help, possibly from earnings saved while in slavery. His son, James Wilson, Jr., purchased land adjacent to his, likely by using money from his Army pension and his work as an oysterman like his father.[421]

Kinship networks like those sustained by the Wilsons, as well as economic motivations and an emotional connection to the land, underlay the choice by most freed

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[418] Ruthe Winegarten, *Black Texas Women: A Sourcebook* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 280
[419] Mary (Genus) Davis erected one of the earliest black-owned houses in the area on a plot of land she purchased in the late 1800s. Additionally, Sarah Owens—wife of Solomon Owens—purchased the 2.5 acres upon which they built their house in 1901. The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "Memorandum to Montgomery County Planning Board on Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservations:* Solomon Owens House, 18200 Cattail Road, #17/8-11 (Demolition Permit Pending)" (September 19, 2003), 15.
[420] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 147–48. McDaniel interviewed Benjamin Ross in 1977 and 1978.
[421] Ibid., 200.

people in the first several decades after the Civil War to build their homes in the South.[422] Migration westward became a popular phenomenon with the Exoduster Movement and other westward migrations, but the actual number of black families who moved was quite small. Northward migration would not become a significant factor until the early twentieth century. Most black individuals and families who migrated in the late nineteenth century did so from rural to urban areas.[423] But even in this case, migration was often impermanent. Movement was certainly frequent, but it appears to have taken place most often within a small territory known by the individual or family. Archaeologists and anthropologists use the term "shifting" rather than "migrating" to describe much of the movement of black individuals in the postbellum era. Shifting includes movement between individual farms within or across different regions, as well as between farms on the same property. Shifting was likely easier for tenant or sharecropping families, as it allowed individuals to remain within established kin and social networks.[424] Some moved within the state, some within the same county. Others in fact remained in the same cabins they had been enslaved in.[425] For many, economics limited their mobility. For those who had the resources to purchase land, they also needed someone to sell it to them. Staying in an area where one was "known" and "acceptable"

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[422] A campaign against the "exodus" of southern blacks to northern cities commenced in the late nineteenth century, led by major figures like Frederick Douglass. A major part of the argument evinced by anti-immigration advocates was that the South was the natural home of black Americans. See extracts from Douglass' paper given on the "exodus" at the Social Science Congress at Saratoga in Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, 437–44.

[423] For a general overview of postbellum migration patterns, see Kimberley L. Phillips, "African American Migrations after 1865," in *Daily Life during African American Migrations* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2012), 1–32.

[424] In distinction to shifting, migration refers to movement from one area to another or from a rural to urban environment. See Charles E. Orser, Jr., *The Material Basis of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation: Historical Archaeology in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 112.

[425] Ibid., 90–93.

provided the possibility that a white landowner (often strapped for cash) would be willing to sell.[426] Whether purchasing or renting, however, a number of former slaves evinced an emotional connection to the land that made them stay. Betty Farrow told a WPA interview that she and her family "stayed right dere en de farm" after emancipation "cause it was de only home we knew and no reason to go."[427] Uncle Smart Washington, a former slave on St. Helena Island, declared his intention to stay in the place he called home, even as northern speculators threatened black Sea Island communities: "We born here; we parents' graves here; we donne oder country; dis yere our home. De Nort folks hab home, antee? What a pity dat dey don't love der home like we love we home."[428] Others believed that more opportunities would be available away from the presence of those who enslaved them. Even though their former owners offered them a house, mule, hog, and cow if they stayed on the plantation, Emmaline Heard's mother and father "thought they might fare better elsewhere and hired out to a plantation owner in an adjoining county."[429]

While there were a growing number of black landowning families in the postbellum South, they were certainly a minority. As Green Willbanks stated in a late 1930s WPA interview, "Slaves didn't buy much land for a long time after the war because they didn't have no money."[430] Owning land as a formerly enslaved person was incredibly difficult; most enslaved people had little cash on hand, making their pockets

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[426] Arthur Raper, *Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties*, new ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006, original 1936), 121–25.
[427] Betty Farrow, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 2, Federal Writer's Project, 34.
[428] Quoted in Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom,* 471.
[429] Emmaline Heard, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 2, Federal Writer's Project, 152.
[430] Green Willbanks, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 4, Federal Writer's Project, 145–46.

relatively empty when they stepped into freedom. For example, only 2% of the total black population in the Eastern shore and southern Maryland owned land in 1870.[431] For most black southerners in the first half-century after emancipation, they had not yet experienced enough time as freedpeople to materially change their economic situations and their living conditions. Digging into the physical remains of postbellum black southern life reveals that living conditions were, for many, similar or even more difficult in freedom than in slavery.[432] Du Bois presented this sentiment in his *Southern Workman* series on black housing, asserting that "the living conditions of such freedmen were but a degree above those of former times."[433] While referring specifically to the "country freed man," the fact was that a majority of southern black women and men were in fact living in rural environs for the first half century after freedom.[434] And in the rural South, many elements of slavery lived on or morphed into new oppressive systems after the legal abolition of the institution.

Scholars have persuasively shown how new postbellum labor systems perpetuated many elements of slavery.[435] But less attention has been paid to the material ways that slavery and oppression continued, thereby missing how white landowners preserved their racialized ideology of home during freedom. For most rural black southerners in the postbellum era who did not own land, their homes closely resembled or even physically

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[431] Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 175–76.
[432] Theresa A. Singleton, "Archaeological Implications for Changing Labor Conditions," in *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life,* ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, Inc., 1985), 303; Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 245.
[433] Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; III. The Home of the Country Freedmen," 536.
[434] Du Bois's 1901 estimate was that three-fourths of black Americans lived in "the country districts of the South." W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; I. The Elements of the Problem," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 7 (July 1901): 393.
[435] See especially Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009).

were the same dwellings they inhabited during slavery. As a sharecropper or tenant farmer, black families rented or were provided dwellings as part of their contract with (usually) white landowners. The Harvie Family Papers at the Virginia Historical Society includes over a dozen such contracts between freedpeople and the white landowning family. All laborers were provided with "houseroom" or "house," typically along with rations and clothing at no additional cost, although in some cases there was another price. In order to have his wife Martha and three children live with him, James Smith, a black laborer contracted in August 1865 to work for Lewis Harvie, had to agree that his family would "submit themselves entirely to his [Harvie's] orders and wishes."[436] Such language implies that inhabitants were more slave than free.

The houses that Harvie and other white landowners provided for free black laborers were often literally the same dwellings that had been inhabited by enslaved laborers. Landowners responsible for providing housing often reused slave dwellings, with little changes made to them.[437] As Du Bois noted, "the homes were even worse than before on account of the deterioration of the old slave quarters and the failure to repair them."[438] Especially in the two or three decades after emancipation, when money was tight for most southerners white and black, white landowners made little improvement in quality or comfort to these slave dwellings, now used as sharecropper or tenant dwellings. Certainly this was a practical decision made by white landowners, but there

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[436] Contract between James Smith and Lewis E. Harvie, #2861, Harvie Family Papers, VHS.
[437] See, for example, Charles E. Orser, Jr., "Artifacts, Documents and Memories of the Black Tenant Farmer," *Archaeology* 38, no. 4 (July/August 1985): 51. Nellie Smith remembered that, "After the war was over Grandpa bought one of the old slave cabins from Marse Jack and we lived there for a long time." Nellie Smith, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, 310. A number of former slaves in Georgia also recalled the re-use of slave cabins as sharecropper cabins. See Savannah Unit of the Georgia Writers' Project, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, original 1940, 1986 ed.), 32
[438] Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; III. The Home of the Country Freedmen," 535.

was another potential motivation: psychological manipulation of the formerly enslaved. Living in dwellings that so forcibly reminded the inhabitants of slavery could be a method of re-instating the antebellum status quo. As Charles Nordhoff noted, in the "state of slavery these blacks were rigidly kept to a certain uniform, in dress and other surroundings, which was the mark of their servile condition."[439] Maintaining material reminders, or those "marks," of slavery was one technique of preserving the social structure that had undergirded slavery. Since employers often provided dwellings as part of the labor agreement, white landowners could force formerly enslaved people to continue living in slave dwellings.

There was a material and visual continuity in the house types of rural black southerners from slavery to freedom: small log cabins, often only one or two rooms, remained prevalent into the early twentieth century. As late as 1915, one traveller through the region expressed surprise about such a continuity, declaring that, "The housing conditions of the negro farmer have not changed since slavery nearly so much as…one might reasonably expect. I have traveled through the county in almost every section of the South, and the negro farm houses consist usually of one, two, or three rooms."[440] While white as well as black tenant farming families commonly occupied this small cabin type throughout the rural South, formerly enslaved people continued to connect this form to slavery.[441] Structural investigations reveal little difference between slave cabins of the 1850s and tenant cabins of the 1870s in Maryland, which archaeologists maintain was

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[439] Charles Nordhoff, *The Freedmen of South-Carolina: Some Account of Their Appearance, Character, Condition, and Peculiar Customs* (New York: Charles T. Evans, 1863), 19.
[440] Willis Duke Weatherford, *Negro Life in the South: Present Conditions and Needs* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 63–64.
[441] For an example of the same tenant cabin occupied at different times by a black and, later, white family, see discussion of the Cusic-Medley house of St. Mary's County, Maryland, in McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 149–85.

part of a broader southern trend.[442] This makes the dating of southern cabins particularly difficult: not only are most antebellum and postbellum homes gone completely, but the similarities between slave and tenant houses, particularly the very plain design, give few definitive datable elements. (Figure 4.3) Stereographs and other photographs of rural black dwellings in the postbellum South—including in Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida—depict the small log cabin associated with both slavery and freedom.[443]

There were other continuities between the living conditions of ante- and postbellum black homes: as in slavery, unwanted white individuals surveilled and intruded upon black dwellings. The racialized ideology of home that slaveowners inscribed into the law, literature, and landscape of the South morphed as the legal institution of slavery died. No longer was the denial of home based on race *de jure*; as citizens, black individuals had the rights to property, life, and privacy, as inscribed in constitutional amendments. But the *de facto* denial of home rights to black individuals continued even in the face of the 13th and 14th amendments, written into labor contracts and enacted through racial violence (the latter of which will be discussed in detail in chapter 5). In 1867, South Carolina rice planter Dr. J. Rhett Mott hired 28 freed people with the stipulation that, "They agree to keep their houses & garden plots in a neat & orderly manner, & subject to the inspection of the employer or his agent at any time."[444] Such language is reminiscent of advice given to slave owners by plantation management

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[442] Ibid., 136. See also Singleton, "Archaeological Implications for Changing Labor Conditions," 296.
[443] The stereograph collection at the American Antiquarian Society includes a box featuring African American scenes. Over three dozen stereographs depict a black family within or near a small cabin in various areas of the South. African Americans—box 283, Stereograph collection, American Antiquarian Society. For more on the connections between photographs of slavery and freedom, see chapter 6.
[444] John David Smith, "More than Slaves, Less than Freedmen: The 'Share Wages' Labor System During Reconstruction," *Civil War History* 26 (September 1980): 263–65.

advocates, including the belief that, "The interior of their [slave] dwellings should be frequently inspected by the master or overseer to see that all is right within—that they keep a clean house."[445] The tasks of overseers and owners to inspect, intrude, and surveill black domestic spaces did not cease with emancipation. One explicit example of this comes from the formbooks of Philip St. George Cocke, whose antebellum overseer manuals were discussed at length in chapter 1. Even after the abolition of slavery, which abolitionists hoped would destroy with it oppressive labor and living systems, Cocke continued to supply his overseer at his Belmead plantation with the same formbook provided to overseers during slavery. The weekly Sunday inspection of quarters was to continue, as were the numerous tasks under the heading "PLANTATION MANAGEMENT. POLICE."[446] Ignoring the momentous break in the southern economy and social system that emancipation initiated, Cocke demanded that his now free black laborers withstand the same encroachment into their bodily and domestic privacy experienced under slavery. It is likely these free black men, women, and children were living in the same dwellings they had formerly inhabited, making the persistence of slavery into freedom all too real. As Du Bois deftly put it, "The Big House and the slave quarters remained" even after slavery was gone.[447]

Serious barriers existed to improving living conditions, most especially a lack of money and time associated with severe poverty throughout the rural South. For wage-earners, income was typically enough to supply the necessities of life and perhaps small

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[445] *Advice Among Masters,* 129.
[446] Three postbellum formbooks—1866, 1868, 1871—remain from Cocke's Belmead Plantation. Like their antebellum counterparts, postbellum supervisors were not particularly attentive to their surveillance duties, or perhaps they were not attentive to their duty to notate such surveillance. Philip St. George Cocke Papers, VHS.
[447] Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; III. The Home of the Country Freedmen," 535.

luxuries like new clothing.[448] Rarely was there enough left over to buy supplies or contract out significant improvements on a dwelling. As archaeologist Teresa Singleton suggests, the quality of home construction and amount of effort, time, and money put into building and renovation depended largely on how frequently a family moved.[449] Indeed, with the common practice of "shifting" between farms, it made little sense for black men and women to spend their hard earned money improving dwellings they did not actually own.[450] But, as archaeologist Jodi A. Barnes persuasively argues, poverty did not necessarily break families and homes.[451] Many material examples remain to demonstrate how sharecroppers and tenant farmers utilized the skill of improvisation, or "making do" as historian George McDaniel puts it, that so many had acquired during slavery to improve their lives in freedom.[452]

A common refrain from inhabitants, black activists, and travelers was that the homes of sharecropper and tenant farming families were simply too small. Cramped slave dwellings became cramped free dwellings, and one or two rooms was not enough to accommodate families, many of which were large and multi-generational.[453] For those

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[448] Labor Contracts, Freedmen's Bureau Collection, Record Group 105, National Archives, Washington D.C, in McDaniel, *Hearth and Home,* 133.
[449] Singleton, "Archaeological Implications for Changing Labor Conditions," 303.
[450] As archaeologist Charles Orser notes, the labor contracts of freed men and women made clear that they did not own these homes, and thus had little incentive to improve these spaces. Orser, *The Material Basis of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation*, 120, 141–42.
[451] Jodi A. Barnes, "Land Rich and Cash Poor: The Materiality of Poverty in Appalachia," *Historical Archaeology* 45, no. 3 (2011): 26–40.
[452] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 137. McDaniel notes that this was not a particularly African American characteristic, nor that black housing types and evolutions in them were directly related to one's race. Still, improvisation was a necessary coping mechanism that continued from slavery into freedom.
[453] In the half-century after emancipation, most black families living in the rural South inhabited one- or two-room cabins. As one study of black Alabamians in the 1890s clearly put it, "In the country practically all the Negroes live in cabins, generally built of logs, with only one or at most two rooms." U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Experiment Stations, *Dietary Studies with Reference to the Food of the Negro in Alabama in 1895 and 1896*, by W. O. Atwater and Charles D. Woods (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), 16.

who had the resources to build, one option of expanding the square footage was to build a small addition, usually to the rear of the house. Extant dwellings confirm this practice in other free black homes, as seen in the Point of Pines slave cabin now featured in the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Originally built as a two room, hall-and-parlor cabin with loft accessible by ladder, inhabitants built a rear shed appendage after emancipation, thus adding a whole new room to the dwelling. (Figure 4.4) A stereograph entitled "Aunt Rachel's Cabin" pictures this practice in progress, showing a large wood dwelling with an addition. A window and possibly door sit on the outward facing wall, with beams above and posts to enclose the area outside it. This area, perhaps a porch or garden, looks as if it might be enclosed in the future. Another addition to the house, this one enclosed, sits on the opposite side of the house, as indicated by the seam in the wall and variously hewn planks. (Figures 4.5a & 4.5b) It is possible the building was not originally a dwelling, as there is no indication of a chimney (although it could simply be out of view). It is unclear whether the structure was built in slavery or freedom, but what is clear is that after emancipation, this black family increased the size and comfort of their dwelling, likely using scrap materials. The builders of a Maryland sharecropper house, erected in the 1880s or 1890s, also recycled materials, using nails dated no later than the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the builders used nails that had once fastened a slave cabin or other plantation building.[454] Additionally, scars in joists and in rafters and plates on the house's second floor indicate that the wood was taken from another building, possibly that same former slave structure.[455] Formerly

[454] George McDaniel, "The Sharecropper's House in the Hall of Everyday Life in the Museum of History and Technology" (1978), 42, Library of the Division of Home and Community Life, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution (NMAH).
[455] Ibid., 44.

enslaved laborers might also rearrange the plantation landscape, dispersing the common nucleated settlements of southern plantations to provide more space, better access to farmland, and more privacy from others (and former owners).[456]

Construction materials were plentiful when experiments in black towns failed. The tumultuous decades after emancipation necessitated experimentation, not only at the familial and home level but at the governmental. Just a year after the Union Army occupied Hilton Head Island in South Carolina in 1861, and after seeing the poor living conditions of the hundreds of runaway slaves living outside the Army camps, the US government created an all-black town known as Mitchelville. At the end of the war in April 1865, archival sources indicate Mitchelville was at its peak population, about 3000 inhabitants. But just five years later, those numbers had plummeted.[457] The venture would ultimately fail, a result of the government's inability to adequately support black citizens. After the Army left town in 1868, most black denizens saw their employment opportunities leave with it. Few wage-paying jobs were left in the town. And since the government had never provided home owners with legal titles to the lots (lots that the government had themselves given), most families moved away to buy, rent, or sharecrop in other areas. When they left, the houses they had built were dismantled and materials used for other purposes, as seen in the archaeological record.[458]

But the few years that Mitchelville thrived saw the construction of dozens of new homes by ex-slaves, making the town an excellent case study for investigating how newly

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[456] Carolyn Baker Lewis, "The World around Hampton: Post-Bellum Life on a South Carolina Plantation," *Agricultural History* 58, no. 3 (July 1984): 456–76; Orser, *The Material Basis of the Postbellum Tenant Plantation*, 90–93.
[457] 1870 US Census.
[458] Scott Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville (38BU2301) Hilton Head Island Airport Improvements Study Area" (2013), 200.

freed people built homes when provided with minimal resources. The Department of the South provided basic building materials—including boards, nails, and hammers—to the black women and men who flocked to Mitchelville, giving them free reign to construct their dwellings as they saw fit.[459] These were to be temporary dwellings, and were referred to as "refugee quarters" in the eight photographs, taken by Samuel A. Cooley in 1864, that remain of the freedmen's homes. Although these houses were labeled as "refugee quarters," the dwellings themselves speak to the builders' long-term aspirations. True, the photographs reveal buildings that were likely seen, at least by those in the government, as temporary in nature. Freed people, however, wanted to own this land and their homes. And they were not going to simply accede to what the government dictated for their town. As Dana Byrd has shown, some of the irregular housing arrangement seen through the photographs and the regimented spatial arrangement described on the map shows that formerly enslaved people arranged their houses as they pleased, rather than completely ascribing to how cartographers idealized the freedman's town.[460] (Figure 4.6)

In many ways, these dwellings were very similar to slave cabins on nearby plantations. All of the homes are simple frame buildings approximately 12 by 16 feet. Most appear, from the exterior, to be one-room. (Figure 4.7) White travelers focused on the similarities between Mitchelville's free homes and the slave cabins nearby: "At that time [1863] there were about seventy houses,—or cabins, rather,—of the rudest description, built of logs, chinked with clay brought up from the beach, roofs of long split

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[459] Ibid., 18–19.

[460] Dana E. Byrd, "Loot, Occupy, and Re-envision: Material Culture of the South Carolina Plantation, 1861–1867," in *The Civil War and the Material Culture of Texas, the Lower South, and the Southwest*, The David B. Warren Symposium, vol. 3 (Houston: Museums of Fine Arts, Houston, 2012), 80. This may have been more of a conceptual map than a reflection of reality. See "Indian and Freeman Occupation at the Fish Haul Site (38BU805), Beaufort County, South Carolina," ed. Michael Trinkley (Chicora Foundation, 1986), 88.

shingles, board floors, windows with shutters,—plain board blinds, without sash or glass."[461] This description could have easily described the slave cabins on the nearby plantation of Drayton Hall, which Henry P. Moore photographed just two years before Cooley snapped photographs of Mitchelville's free homes. (Figure 4.8) As at Drayton Hall, Mitchelville was to be laid out in streets much like local plantation owners had done, though as noted above, black residents did not so easily accede to this plan. Additionally, the enforcement of cleanliness standards parallels the advice given by plantation management advocates in the antebellum era. The federal government required that the Mitchelville town government "lay out, regulate and clean the streets," as well as "establish wholesale sanitary regulations for the prevention of disease."[462]

In small but important ways, however, these free homes were distinct from slave dwellings. They demonstrate the individuality of each builder, unlike the identical dwellings present on so many southern plantations. While most were one-room, many included additions. One family, likely unable to afford or find the adequate building materials, made a makeshift addition with a tent, perhaps found, taken, or given from the nearby Union camp.[463] (Figure 4.9) The house exteriors were quite different, some residents utilized weatherboarding, while others used board and batten siding or flush-board siding. White washing appears to have been prevalent, despite the assuredness with which the traveler Charles Coffin declared that, "There was no paint or lime, not even whitewash, about them."[464] Some put their money into glass windows, while others

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[461] Charles C. Coffin, *Four Years of Fighting* (Boston: Ticknow and Fields, 1865), 231–32.
[462] General Orders No. 3, Hilton Head, S.C. (February 18, 1865), AMA Archives, Document #5523, in Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville," 27.
[463] The main military complex was located just about a mile from Mitchelville. Ibid., 18.
[464] Coffin, *Four Years of Fighting,* 232. Cooley's photographs confirm the use of whitewashing.

settled on wooden shutters, a feature common in slave dwellings. Decorative elements are present: Dana Byrd discovered that many of the front doors included knobs made of agateware, a type of pottery decorated with contrasting colors of clay.[465] Brick chimneys replaced the log chimneys and more dangerous mud-and-stick chimneys so common during slavery.[466] Additionally, the presence of iron stovepipes protruding from the roofs of multiple dwellings is particularly interesting, indicating the presence of cast iron stoves, a luxury by most standards at this time. (Figure 4.10) Such an addition would alleviate the domestic work of women, who previously would have to work in the extreme heat of fireplaces to prepare meals and perform other domestic duties. Indeed, as George McDaniel notes, the widespread replacement of open-hearth cooking with stoves in rural housing did not occur until the early twentieth century.[467] The presence of metal stovepipes indicates that recently freed black women, when given the chance to dictate the objects in their homes, likely demanded new technologies meant to make their domestic work easier.

The houses in Mitchelville evinced significant change from slave dwellings in a very limited amount of time. For the great majority of southern rural black individuals, however, it would take decades until resources became available to invest heavily in home improvements. Change would come, though at a slower pace than for town people in Mitchelville. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, homes of many sharecropping families began undergoing changes. The form itself began to change, some

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[465] Byrd, "Loot, Occupy, and Re-envision," 78.
[466] A late-nineteenth-century federal government report on the lives of black families in Alabama noted that log chimneys were still a prevalent feature of black dwellings in the rural South. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Dietary Studies with Reference to the Food of the Negro,* 17. Images from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century corroborate such statements. See Stereograph Collection, AAS.
[467] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 136–37.

homes taking on a chamber plan instead of single unit.[468] In Maryland, one-room cabins transformed into two- or three-bay structures with two rooms upstairs and two down.[469] This was an important improvement in the eyes of activists, especially middle-class and elite black women who had been leading the campaign against the one-room cabin.[470] Comfort would improve with the replacement of log cabins with frame homes, which tended to keep out heat and cold more effectively. The previous luxury of glass windows became more common, as glass became less expensive and sharecroppers recognized the additional barriers they provided against the weather. There were also interior improvements, as dirt floors gave way to plank.[471] As in Mitchelville, stoves began to replace open-hearth cook areas.[472] Changes were typically slow, and occurred at different rates in different areas. For example, houses nearer to urban centers tended to evince improvements sooner than those farther.[473]

These slow-moving improvements would have likely been initiated by white landowners, who had even less incentive to keep houses in good condition. During slavery, the combined economic and paternalist incentives motivated planters to offer enslaved people some security in their homes. Enslaved men and women recognized this, and were able to negotiate for moments and spaces of privacy and safety. Yet, as Laurie Wilkie argues, after emancipation, black men and women "were stripped of their value as

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[468] McDaniel, "The Sharecropper's House in the Hall of Everyday Life," 50.
[469] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 136. But even into the early twentieth century, there were still a large number of one-room cabins, both for those who rented and those who owned.
[470] More on this in chapter 6.
[471] Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; III. The Home of the Country Freedmen," 536.
[472] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 136–37, 186.
[473] Donald McDauley, "The Urban Impact on Agriculture in Prince George County, 1850-1880," in *Law, Society, and Politics in Early Maryland: Proceedings of the First Conference on Maryland History, June 14-15, 1974, eds.* Aubrey C. Land, et. al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

planter property and therefore lost much of their negotiating power."[474] For tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and renters, there were few opportunities to press white landowners to improve their homes. And so the advancement of living conditions for non-landowning black southerners was often painfully slow.

For those able to purchase a plot of land and build a house of their own, the possibility for improvement was greater, though the earliest incarnations most often resembled slave and sharecropper cabins. Indeed, archaeologists note that there was little difference in material conditions for those with or without land immediately after emancipation; both built houses as they had known and could afford to do. Many men built structures while enslaved, and were able to bring that knowledge to bear.[475] Additionally, log buildings were significantly less expensive to build than other forms, like pisé or rammed-earth dwellings.[476] Whether landowners or not, black men and women continued to "make do." And so most first houses built by black landowners were, like non-landowners, small log cabins.[477] Though homes were often plain in appearance, like slave cabins, these log houses were often whitewashed inside and out to add an element of polish. Other improvements, which happened sooner in landowning homes than non-landowning, included wooden rather than earthen floors, filled crawl spaces (which acting as insulation from cold or hot air entering below house), insulated

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[474] Wilkie, *Creating Freedom*, 245.
[475] A Georgia planter-physician noted in 1857 that slave "houses are too often left to the negroes themselves to build in their own time, perhaps at night or during the Sabbath, which easily explains their careless manner of construction." *Advice Among Masters*, 318.
[476] Although log and frame dwellings were less expensive, they were also much more difficult to keep cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Gardiner Hallock, "Pisé Construction in Early Nineteenth-Century Virginia," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 11 (2004): 40–53.
[477] McDaniel investigated dozens of postbellum black communities throughout southern Maryland and in Montgomery County, and argues that the first generation of landowners overwhelmingly built log cabins reminiscent of those built in slavery. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 238.

walls with stones and mortar, replaced shuttered windows with glass panes, and lathed and plastered walls.[478] Even with such improvements, the first generation of free homes closely resembled slave dwellings. These houses may have looked like those in slavery, but there was a major difference: they were built with free labor. Those who constructed them, typically male family and community members in the first several free generations, had the opportunity to imbue individuality into houses, something so apparent in the case of Mitchelville.[479]

As with non-landowning families, often one of the first dramatic improvements to home would be an addition or expansion. More room meant more comfort and healthier living conditions for large families. Adding on to log cabins was a way of improving life, but also distinguishing free homes from enslaved ones. In Ben's Creek, a black community in Calvert County, Maryland, a one-and-a-half story log structure built by the Brooks family was enlarged in the early twentieth century with a frame addition, raising the height to a full two stories.[480] While rural slave dwellings were rarely more than one story with a loft, two stories indicated a family's freedom, prosperity, and permanency. Such can also be seen in another house in Ben's Creek, the Harrod house, which was built around 1869 as a log house. Although elements distinguished this dwelling from slave cabins—in particular the shed dormer window and board-and-batten siding—it still overwhelmingly had a visual resemblance to a slave dwelling. By end of century, however, the Harrod House had been significantly renovated. To the gable end of the

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[478] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home,* 204–205.
[479] The first second, and sometimes third generations of formerly enslaved people built their own homes, as represented by Richard Jones's family. With the help of family and community, Richard constructed his home around 1875. Nearly forty years later his grandson, Elmer (a carpenter, stone mason, and bricklayer), constructed his own house in the same community of Jonesville. "Description," page 2, in Maryland Historic Trust, "Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—Jonesville Historic District."
[480] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 203.

house, the family added a two-story frame block structure with a three bay façade. With a central door flanked by windows on each side, the overall appearance was balanced and refined. This tripartite, bilateral symmetry was popular among rural landowners of moderate means in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To accent the roof line, and thus the two stories that so clearly showed one's entry into a higher class of home owners, the family added a cross-gable pediment. Inside, the block addition included specified rooms like a parlor and dining room, luxuries in comparison with the multi-use rooms so prevalent in small black homes across the rural South.[481] (Figure 4.11) No longer would this home be simply labeled a log cabin, an image associated still with slavery.

The transition from log to frame structures as an emblem of family and racial progress is seen clearly in the all-black community of Jonesville, near Poolesville, Maryland. The seeds of Jonesville began with the 1866 purchase of 9 1/8 acres of land by Erasmus Jones from Thomas Hall. The community really began to grow when Richard D. Jones, another former slave and possible relative of Erasmus, and other black families, many of whom were descendants of Erasmus and Richard, settled Jonesville in the late nineteenth century.[482] While most black families lived as landless tenants or sharecroppers, many in Montgomery County, including those in Jonesville, were able to purchase land and thereby build a comparatively more independent lifestyle.[483] As happened throughout the county and beyond, black families purchased small parcels of

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[481] Ibid., 207–20.
[482] McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources,* 109–10. Some sources suggest that Richard and Erasmus were enslaved at this very plantation; see Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—Jonesville Historic District, 1. Yet I have been unable to find significant evidence that shows they were slaves at the Aix-la-Chapelle plantation or owned by William Brewer (owner of said plantation).
[483] "Memorandum to Montgomery County Planning Board…Solomon Owens House," 2–3.

property adjacent to other black families, thereby laying the groundwork for all-black communities like Jonesville.[484] Unlike Mitchelville, which was a federal project that failed when the government pulled out, Jonesville was a natural outgrowth of black families and extended kin networks coming together to support one another. Though most men worked on nearby white farms, Jonesville community members prided themselves on a relatively self-sufficient way of living, building their own houses and providing part of their diet through gardens and meat-processing.[485] For freed people, self-sufficiency did not entail a rejection of help from others, but rather a continuation of the communal way of life so necessary under slavery.

As with other first-generation free homes, the dwelling of Richard D. Jones was a rather small log cabin with plain architectural features. Yet on closer examination, the home exudes a sense of pride and an independence in building. In 1870, Jones was a farm laborer on the property of Joseph Bruner, who owned a portion of the Aix-la-Chapelle plantation.[486] Just five years later, Jones officially owned nine acres of Bruner's land, paying $135 for the plot.[487] Jones built a two-story log house, which later generations expanded at the turn of the twentieth century to include a second L-frame section.[488] The original log block contained two rooms down and two up, providing more space than most slave dwellings.[489] The house façade—three bays with central door flanked by

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[484] McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources,* 23.
[485] "Memorandum to Montgomery County Planning Board…Solomon Owens House," 3.
[486] 1870 Census.
[487] Deed of Sale, Joseph Bruner to Richard Jones, January 27, 1875, NMAAHC.
[488] "Statement of Significance," Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—The Jones-Hall House, 4.
[489] "Description," Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—The Jones-Hall House, 3.

windows—expressed a sense of refinement of those living within.[490] (Figure 4.12) Jones's house is representative of the kind many landowning black families built after emancipation, one of the reasons it is featured in the National Museum of African American History and Culture. But on a smaller level, Richard Jones's home was considered "truly the center of the historical Jonesville community."[491] While public spaces like churches were significant in the lives of freed people, homes were as central to the maintenance not only of family but community.[492]

Close to Richard Jones's home in Jonesville were two dwellings that represent a second phase in building for black landowners. Built a couple decades after Jones's, these houses demonstrate the progress of community members and the importance they placed on exhibiting uplift through their homes. Both Basil Bailey and Solomon Owens continued the tradition of two-story homes, but refined these structures by using frame construction rather than log-building.[493] Erected around 1899, Bailey's home was physical evidence of his personal uplift and freedom. When compared with a common, one-room log slave dwelling—a structure he may have inhabited during slavery—his two-story frame house was an obvious material improvement and figurative symbol of his ascension from property-less slave to propertied freeman. (Figure 4.13) Solomon Owen's house, finished just two years later, was an even more impressive structure. Built

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[490] The entry door was on the long side, where most of the logs have been replaced. Jones Sims House, Poolesville, MD, Dimensions, NMAAHC.
[491] "Statement of Significance," Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—The Jones-Hall House, 4.
[492] Public buildings like churches and schools were not built in Jonesville. Community members became a part of congregations and educational institutions in nearby Jerusalem, Maryland. "Statement of Significance," pg 1, in Maryland Historical Trust, "Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—Jonesville Historic District."
[493] Other two-story houses in Jonesville included the George M. Martin house, c. 1880s, and the Mary Genus Davis house, ca. 1870s-1890s. McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources,* 110, 117.

on the 2 ½ acre property purchased by his wife, Sarah "Sallie" I. Owens, in 1901, this two-and-one-half story frame house was substantial in size and refined in design.[494] Like Jones and Bailey before him, Owens built a three-bay façade with central door flanked by windows. Unlike the other two, however, the Owens house included a pair of chimneys and center-cross gable roof, both of which added to the overall symmetry and refinement. With two rooms downs and two up, there was ample room for Owens's family. The weatherboards went unpainted, making the overall feeling of this rural farmhouse simple yet elegant.[495]

The transition from a log to frame house was a significant one, representing the transition from slavery and tenancy to landownership and greater independence. Joseph Ross, who had escaped slavery to join the Union army, lived in a typical tenant farm house after emancipation. In 1887, however, he and later his wife purchased parcels of land and decided that a frame house—a style then taking root for rural landowners of moderate means—would better represent his new status.[496] He hired a white carpenter with black assistants to build the dwelling, rather than the typical method of using community members to build. With two stories and a total of six rooms, the dwelling was large in comparison to most other rural black houses of the time. Ross had lived in a small log cabin while a tenant farmer, but he escaped tenancy, like he did slavery, and

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[494] "Memorandum to Montgomery County Planning Board…Solomon Owens House," 2.
[495] "Description," Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—Solomon Owens House (1976), 14.
[496] Like the home of Elmer Jones—the grandson of Richard Jones—the Joseph Ross house was "representative of the type built by the more prosperous landowners of that period in Black communities throughout the county and state." "Statement of Significance," in Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—Elmer Jones House, 4. Dating of land purchase comes from McDaniel's interviews of Benjamin and Nellie Ross in 1977. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 148.

sought immediately upon land ownership to build a frame house to match his new position and freedom.[497]

Whether landowning or landless, black families looked not only to the structure but the interior of the home as they proclaimed their freedom and sought to improve their living conditions. African American ambition exhibited itself through land and houses, but also in the objects within them. This, of course, required improvisation, for most houses owned, rented, or lived in by black southerners were architecturally and decoratively plain and few families had the resources to dramatically alter those spaces. A popular technique, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was the use of newspapers, magazine, and seed catalogues as wallpaper and decoration. A number of photographs from this period document this practice, which tended to position the most colorful pictures around center of the home. (Figure 4.14) This was not simply a black decorating technique, as visual and textual evidence confirms that poor, rural white families also utilized this method.[498] Perhaps more a symptom of economics, it is intriguing still to wonder if black families intentionally chose different "wall paper" than white.

In addition to being rather plain in appearance, most free dwellings (like slave homes) were small for the number of inhabitants, typically including only one or two rooms. This meant that rooms had multiple purposes, but black women in particular had ways of improving even the smallest of spaces, particularly with their skills in sewing and quilting. As during slavery, the home was the center of sewing for black women.

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[497] McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 146–49. Benjamin Ross, the son of Joseph, described in detail his father's homes after the Civil War, but does not discuss his house while enslaved.

[498] This decorating and insulation technique grew in popularity, and is now often associated with the Great Depression thanks to the photographs of Margaret Bourke-White and others.

Memoirs and interviews relate the continuation of daily chores and sewing circles in black homes after emancipation. Archaeological evidence also corroborates this point; a thimble found during an excavation at Mitchelville includes the embossed phrase "HONOUR THE BRAVE," thereby connecting the domestic work of black women to patriotic and political pursuits.[499] Beyond the creation and maintenance of clothing, historian Jeff Hardwick has identified a number of one-room cabins in Langston, Oklahoma that hung quilts and other fabrics as room dividers.[500] To a white man, like the journalist Charles Nordhoff, this technique seemed to create just an "astounding agglomerations of rags…which seemed to me the most dreary discomfort."[501] Yet this was both a kind of material culture and visual art. It was functional furnishing in that it allowed families to use their single room for multiple purposes: kitchen, dining room, parlor, sleeping area. It was ornamental art in that exhibited a black woman's skill and aesthetics. These furnishings and art could also be used to warm up on a chilly day; they were quilts after all. It is certainly possible the women had been hanging quilts as a functional and ornamental practice during slavery. Yet the absence of such practices in the reminiscences of former slaves, coupled with the fact that many slave owners set forth strict rules about keeping cabins free of "clutter," indicates it was a practice more popular after emancipation.[502] Postbellum quilts made were a representation of freedom

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[499] A range of sewing-related items, including buttons, clothing, and sewing materials, were found during excavations at the Mitchelville site. See Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville," 166.
[500] M. Jeff Hardwick, "Homesteads and Bungalows: African American Architecture in Langston, Oklahoma" (MA thesis, University of Delaware, 1994), 65–70.
[501] Nordhoff, *The Freedmen of South-Carolina*, 19.
[502] A number of slave management studies noted that owners and overseers took great pains to keep cabins and quarters free of clutter. One slave owner made sure that his slaves moved their cabins once in two or three years, since the "filth accumulates under the floor so much in two years as to cause disease." James Tait, quoted in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown & Company, 1929), 280–1.

and progress, a mode of expressing one's taste freely and of showing one's capacity for progress through the uplift of the home interior.

Interior decorating thus became an activity through which black women, in particular, expressed themselves. As explored in chapter three, it appears from the remaining evidence that most slave cabins were sparse spaces.[503] Slave narratives list the few pieces typical of these dwellings: a three-legged bed attached to the wall, one or two chairs, and a table.[504] Millie Randall claimed there was no furniture at all in her Big Cane, Louisiana dwelling.[505] Mollie Taylor of Campbell, Texas told an interviewer in the 1930s that, "there was no furniture like there is today."[506] Anyone living in desolate circumstances would revel in the opportunity to improve one's living conditions, particularly the comfort of one's dwelling, through accumulating objects like furnishings. This was not a tactic utilized solely by newly freed African Americans. Crude houses and scant furniture were common for settlers and non-elite families. Yet formerly enslaved people held a different relationship with consumerism.

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[503] Dozens of nineteenth- and twentieth-century narratives confirm this. Just a few examples include, S.J. Celestine Edwards, *From Slavery to a Bishopric, or, The Life of Bishop Walter Hawkins of the British Methodist Episcopal Church Canada* (London: Kensit, 1891), 47; Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: Arthur D. Phelps, 1849), 31; Josephine Brown, *Biography of an American Bondman, by His Daughter* (Boston, Mass.: R.F. Wallcut, 1856), 10; Louis Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom: The Institution of Slavery as Seen on the Plantations and in the Home of the Planter* (Milwaukee, Wis.: South Side Printing Company, 1897), 26; Adeline Cunningham, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 1, Federal Writer's Project, 266; Jenny Proctor, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, 211.

[504] Peter Bruner, *A Slaves' Adventures Toward Freedom, Not Fiction, but the True Story of a Struggle* (Oxford, Ohio: 1918), 13; Campbell Davis, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 1, Federal Writer's Project, 285; Richard Orford, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4 pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, 151; Charlie Pye, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, 185.

[505] Millie Randall, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, 227.

[506] Mollie Taylor, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 4, Federal Writer's Project, 76.

The connection between consumerism and freedom was widely felt and expressed throughout American culture, but took on additional meaning for formerly enslaved people after emancipation. As archaeologist Paul Mullins argues, black Americans used material goods to negotiate a racist society and maintain the privileges of "consumer citizenship." This type of citizenship linked material abundance to social empowerment, both of which had long been denied to black Americans. Indeed, some white and black writers argued that consumption would bring not only citizenship but civilization. Writing about the Mitchelville experiment on Hilton Head Island, Charles Nordhoff noted that, "The day which sees the introduction of the itinerant Yankee peddler will be an important one… he will be a valuable helper in advancing civilization here."[507] Engaging in a range of responses to the emergent American consumerism—from complete acceptance to outright rejection—black women and men nonetheless sought to gain a portion of the national affluence while combatting the white supremacy that undergirded that culture. Consumption of material goods, Mullins posits, "demonstrated how African Americans could 'consume' dominant social ambitions and subjectivity, posing a potentially radical shift in White consumer citizenship."[508] A number of black community leaders would counter this position, noting that thrift was the true method through which economic and political independence would occur.[509] This would not stop

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[507] Nordhoff, *The Freedmen of South-Carolina,* 18.

[508] Paul R. Mullins, *Race and Affluence: An Archaeology of African America and Consumer Culture* (New York: Springer, 1999), 160. Still, Mullins reminds us that not all African American consumers were cognizant that their consumer tactics were radical.

[509] By the 1920s, many African American intellectuals regarded the "thrift discourse" as completely bereft of value, only furthering the myth that hard work and thrift would bring affluence. See E. Franklin Frazier, "Durham: Capital of the Black Middle Class," in *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Arno Press, 1968, originally published 1925), 337. Yet still many black Americans clung to the idea that thrift would facilitate the realization of race and class independence, even as white discourses promulgated thrift as a means of continuing dependence. Mullins, *Race and Affluence*, 181.

black women and men from shopping, acquiring goods, and decorating homes, and taking pride in the ability to do so. Consumption was a powerful and multivalent tool, regarded as integral to various aspects of the racial uplift movement, including the betterment of living conditions, participation in an "American" way of life, fulfillment of civil citizenship, and thus the realization of emancipation's promises.

As part of this consumer citizenship, black Americans purchased, re-appropriated, and discarded domestic objects that defined and displayed their freedom. For many, their furnishing options were limited by lack of funds, and many free black homes continued to be filled with multi-purpose, utilitarian furniture. Willis Duke Weatherford, who expressed surprise over the continuity in house form from slavery to freedom, described the interior of free black farm houses as "poorly furnished, poorly kept, with no pictures, and with the barest necessities for living."[510] Balancing the textual archive with the material is therefore imperative here, showing that even those with extremely limited means sought non-utilitarian objects to set their homes apart from the slave dwellings many had formerly inhabited. At Mitchelville, for instance, archaeologists found a large number of fancy and high-status items, including expensive jewelry, silver utensils, transfer-printed ceramics, crystal, and porcelain furniture hardware.[511]

White individuals made assumptions about how and where newly freed people would acquire these goods, including furniture, that would make a house more comfortable. Charles C. Coffin, a northern war correspondent, wrote of his travels around

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[510] Willis Duke Weatherford, *Negro Life in the South: Present Conditions and Needs* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 64.

[511] Michael Trinkley and Debi Hacker, "The Archaeological Manifestations of the 'Port Royal Experiment' at Mitchelville, Hilton Head Island, [Beaufort County], South Carolina," (Chicora Foundation, 1987), 6; Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville," 189.

Mitcheville in 1863, relating a list that he believed conveyed the scarcity that free blacks lived with: "the furniture consisted of three tables, four chairs, a mahogany wash-stand," a list that would have been nearly impossible just years before. He then goes on to adamantly maintain that all of the furniture "once stood in the mansion of some island planter."[512] This observation elides the fact that many free black women and men, especially those in Mitchelville, were purchasing new goods even before emancipation, and simply assumes that black individuals stole these home furnishings.[513] While this was certainly true in some cases, it was not unequivocally true, and ignores the diligence with which black women and men saved to purchase their own goods. As Laurie Wilkie notes, many former slaves might accept secondhand china from former owners, but they did not always happily do so.[514]

Even if the domestic objects that black southerners purchased or appropriated were not expensive or especially fashionable, the fact remains that they sought out more consumer goods for their homes and their bodies. Looking again at the artifact patterns at Mitchelville, it is evident that freed people possessed more clothing, furniture, personal items, and general domestic objects than enslaved individuals had. In some cases, with personal items and furniture, freed men and women had more items that yeoman farmers or even some higher status individuals in the antebellum era.[515] Most artifact remains at postbellum tenant and sharecropping sites are relatively simple and inexpensive, but there were certainly more objects, an indication of the desire for objects. Perhaps the

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[512] Coffin, *Four Years of Fighting,* 232.
[513] Black women and men who escaped to Hilton Head after the Civil War engaged in the island's consumer economy as early as 1862. Trinkley and Hacker, "The Archaeological Manifestations of the 'Port Royal Experiment,'" 5, 7.
[514] Wilkie, *Creating Freedom,* 1–2.
[515] Trinkley and Hacker, "The Archaeological Manifestations of the 'Port Royal Experiment,'" 7.

accumulation of material culture produced a belief that abundance could translate to something greater.

The domestic material world of Roseanna and Squire May, for instance, shows the desire to conquer limitations so long imposed on people of color in the South. Married at their Orange County, Virginia farmhouse on June 8, 1873, the Mays immediately began filling their home with middle-class furniture and domestic wares. Although neither Roseanna nor Squire could read as of the 1880 census, their house included a bookshelf, which Squire, a chairmaker, perhaps constructed himself. The presence of such a furniture piece in the face of the illiteracy of its owners indicate that the Mays placed great hope in the newly found right of black southerners to read and write, including their grandson and other young people in their household.[516] A ceramic pitcher and washbowl demonstrated Roseanna's desire to maintain a clean house and body. (Figures 4.15 a&b) By 1880, Roseanna identified her occupation as keeping her own house, a truly impossible job for most black women before emancipation. Similarly, Harriet Collins of Houston, Texas, declared that once she heard of her freedom, she simply walked off the fields and into keeping house once she was married. So many women followed in Harriet's footsteps that the Freedmen's Bureau was overrun with complaints from white employers, trying to force these women back into fieldwork.[517] A significant number of these women would be compelled by economic necessity to pick up jobs outside the home, including working in the homes of white women, yet those like

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[516] Pencil fragments, slate fragments, book clasps, and other material remnants of education have been found at postbellum sites, indicating the importance of education not only in schools but also in the home. Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville," 186.

[517] James M. Smallwood and Barry A. Crouch, "Texas Freedwomen during Reconstruction," in *Black Women in Texas History,* eds. Bruce A. Glasrud and Merline Pitre (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 39.

Rose who were able dedicate their time to their own homes aspired to demonstrate their aptitude for Victorian virtues like cleanliness and refinement of self and home. Roseanna's marble-top table added to that refinement and displayed her participation in consumer culture, as would a black sequined fan displayed in a glass case, which perhaps sat on the marble-top table or hung next to the portraits of Roseanna and Squire. Outside of visitors' sight sat a wooden box with brass hardware and lined with padded fabric, another piece potentially made by Squire. This box demonstrates the family's desire for concealed spaces within the home, something that women like Roseanna would have pursued when enslaved too. (Figure 4.16) Literacy, hygiene, refinement, consumption of nonessential luxuries, and privacy were difficult to attain for any enslaved person, and the presence of objects within the May household indicate that newly freed people sought to embed these into their homes.[518]

Freedom opened the possibility that such aspirations could be achieved, and the material world of the home helped to do this. Progress was apparent not only through changes to the exterior of homes—transitions from small log cabins to large frame houses being the most obvious example—but also through the procurement of stately furniture and domestic goods. Purchased items were greatly revered, and were regarded as emblems of freedom. A visitor to Mitchelville noted that by 1863 there was a "great demand for plates, knives, forks, tin ware, and better clothing … there is no article of household-furniture or wearing apparel, used by persons of moderate means among us, which they will not purchase, when they are allowed the opportunity of labor and earning wages."[519] These purchased, often non-essential objects were therefore a point of pride

[518] These pieces from the May farmstead in Orange County, Virginia, are now in the NMAAHC collection.
[519] "The Freedmen at Port Royal," *Atlantic Monthly* (September 1863): 310–11.

for former slaves, like Nellie Smith of Athens, Georgia. She connected her identity to the furniture that filled her five-room frame house, including the bed she purchased at a local store after her first marriage. Her furnishings were reminders of her family and her freedom, and they would stay by her side "jus' as long as I live."[520] Those able to invest money into domestic items that reflected their newly found status certainly did so. Perhaps the greatest collection of a postbellum black family's home furniture comes from the Robert Smalls house in Beaufort County, South Carolina. Smalls was the architect and hero of the 1862 *Planter* ship operation, during which he stole a Confederate transport ship and safely sailed it and multiple enslaved families to US-controlled waters. After the war, Smalls served as a legislator and successful businessman, bought the home of his former owner, and filled it with fashionable furniture and domestic goods purchased from the 1860s to 1880s.[521] Many of these objects, from multiple elegant marble-top tables to refined upholstered-mahogany armchairs, beautifully represent the significance with which formerly enslaved men and women imbued their homes and home furnishings.[522] (Figures 4.17 & 4.18)

In slavery, owners considered many quotidian objects unnecessary, giving the acquisition of such goods in freedom much meaning. Oil lamps, for example, gave black families the opportunity to light their houses when they pleased, perhaps for reading, sewing, or enjoying a tobacco pipe at night.[523] Lamps and lamp pieces recovered from

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[520] Nellie Smith, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, 309.

[521] Many biographies of Robert Smalls exist, though a more recent example is from sociologist Andrew Billingsley, *Yearning to Breathe Free: Robert Smalls of South Carolina and His Families* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007).

[522] NMAAHC acquired more than eight stylish and expensive furniture pieces from the Robert Smalls house in 2010.

[523] 195 tobacco-related artifacts found in the Mitchelville excavation. Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville," 180–81.

diverse postbellum domestic sites like Mitchelville, the Jones-Hall-Sims house, and the Robert Smalls house demonstrate that a wide variety of black families demanded the option of illuminating their homes whenever they wished.[524] (Figure 4.19) Other things used daily by contemporary Americans—like a fork and knife—were significant objects in freedom.[525] (Figure 4.20) Lavinia Whiteside Carrington, a former slave, acquired a silver Hall & Eaton fork that had once been owned by her former owner. Tasked with caring for her owner's silver on the family's move from Greenville, South Carolina to Austin, Texas, Carrington held on to this fork long after she was freed, imbuing it with meaning as she handed it down her family line.[526]

These objects and others within the free black home visually distinguished this domestic space from that experienced in slavery. As with the choice to build frame houses over log houses, the rejection of certain goods like "negro-cloth" clothing indicated a preference not only for better, more comfortable things but also ones not associated with enslavement.[527] Instead of the one-room cabins associated with slavery, freed people created specific-use rooms, including parlors and dining rooms, when possible. Along with this came the purchase of specific-use furniture, like parlor sets and dining room tables. The inclusion of built-in-closets demonstrated an abundance of

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[524] Archaeologists found twenty-three lamp parts during the 2013 Mitchelville excavation. Ibid., 145.
[525] While many enslaved people had no utensils, some improvised out of available materials. Adeline Cunningham remembered using oyster shells for spoons, while Emma Watson claimed they used mussel shells. Adeline Cunningham, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 1, Federal Writer's Project, 267; Emma Watson, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Texas Narratives, vol 16, pt 4, Federal Writer's Project, 148.
[526] Before being acquired by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, this fork was owned by Carrington's great great granddaughter, Patricia Olsson Prescott.
[527] A reporter for *Atlantic Monthly* noted that in Mitchelville, "Negro-cloth, as it is called, osnaburgs, russet-colored shoes,—in short, the distinctive formerly dealt out to them, as a uniform allowance,—are very generally rejected." "The Freedmen at Port Royal," 310.

material goods, or at least the desire for it.[528] But the most special objects would not be kept in a closet. A silver-plated teapot, originally owned by John Randolph of Roanoke, was proudly displayed in the home of an African American man on Randolph's plantation in 1901.[529] (Figure 4.21) Black families accumulated china, whether secondhand transferware or hand-painted porcelain, to be used and exhibited in the home. Indeed, several archaeologists have found that the visible pattern of what archaeologist John Solomon Otto calls "Afro-American archaeological visibility" was less apparent in postbellum sites, where pearlwares, whitewares, and printed transferwares dominate the ceramics collection over the more typical, Afro-associated banded ware.[530]

Yet not everything in the home was meant to erase the past. Black families might also incorporate items that physically reminded them of slavery. More than seven decades after the end of slavery, Laney and John Van Hook still proudly displayed slat-back plantation-made chairs in their home, but instead of a slave cabin the chairs were now in their respectable Georgia parlor.[531] (Figure 4.22) The most astounding example of this material legacy of slavery might be the homemade wardrobe displayed in Cornelia Winfield's home. Her father, who had been a slave in Georgia, had gathered all the planks that "any of our family was laid out on" and, after emancipation, made a wardrobe from them.[532] The term "laid out" has at least two meanings, either to beat or to bury;

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[528] McDaniel estimates that built-in closets were added to the Harrod home with the addition of a two-story frame block in the late 1870s/early 1880s. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 215.
[529] The initials "J.R." are engraved on the teapot's belly. Silver teapot, c. late 18th/early 19th century, VHS.
[530] John Solomon Otto, *Canon's Point Plantation, 1794–1860: Living Conditions and Status Patterns in the Old South* (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1984), 171–75. Also, there is typically less colonoware found at postbellum sites than at slave sites, at least in the case of Hilton Head Island. Trinkley and Hacker, "The Archaeological Manifestations of the 'Port Royal Experiment,'" 7–8, 10.
[531] John F. Van Hook, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 4, Federal Writer's Project, 82.
[532] Cornelia Winfield, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol 4, pt 4, Federal Writer's Project, 178.

both meanings point to the violence of slavery. Winfield's father intentionally sought out this wood that had touched the skin of her enslaved ancestors. This wardrobe symbolized how freed people crafted something new, something good, out of their gruesome past. The legacy of slavery was ugly, yet it was meaningful. It allowed black Americans to reflect on the horrors of the institution, undergirding their demand that such atrocities never be committed again. It also created a kind of family history for people who were, until emancipation and access to formal education, unable to write their own history. Since, as in the words of Frederick Douglass, "Genealogical trees do not flourish among slaves," the material reminders of slavery documented the endurance and progress of African Americans.[533]

As part of the documentation effort, black Americans began recording and displaying their past through the material and visual culture of the home. Based on archaeological and first-hand recollection, few slave dwellings had decorative elements displayed on walls, on shelves, or on tables.[534] This does not mean decoration was not possible; the arrangement of utilitarian objects could be an aesthetic statement for enslaved individuals.[535] Yet with the very real possibility of surveillance and intrusion into these spaces while enslaved, as well as the lack of expendable income, black women and men did not have the opportunities to decorate their interior domestic spaces as they would in freedom. Indeed, as Frederick Douglass noted in 1870, "Heretofore, colored

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[533] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: 1855), 34.
[534] It is does not appear common for enslaved people to have decorated their dwelling walls, although Stephanie Camp describes two such cases wherein enslaved women posted amalgamation/abolitionist prints on their cabin walls. Camp notes that documentation of such practices is, indeed, sparse. Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 95.
[535] In slavery and freedom, walls of small houses were often used for storage, but the arrangement of objects on those walls could be done in a decorative way if desired. McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 220.

Americans have thought little of adorning their parlors with pictures…Pictures come not with slavery and oppression and destitution, but with liberty, fair play, leisure, and refinement." With freedom, however, came the potential for recreation and decoration, with Douglass maintaining that, "I think the walls of their houses will soon begin to bear evidence of their altered relations."[536]

When one examines the rapid increase in advertisements, prints, and photographic studios geared towards (or at least open to) African Americans, it would seem that Douglass's premonitions were correct. Some might have read the many exhortations in black newspapers to, "Hang upon the walls of your homes pictures of the men and women of your own race."[537] If not on the walls, the visages of black women and men graced the tables of black homes in the South. By the 1860s, photography was relatively inexpensive, so after the Civil War many who formerly could not afford it had their photograph taken. Eager to display their free status, black women and men flocked to photography studios. Hundreds of examples remain from this period, one striking example being this young woman with an American flag pinned to her chest. (Figure 4.23) This small ambrotype shows her pride in her country and its ideals, most importantly that of liberty, which the nation had just fought a war over and in which she participated as a washerwoman for the Union Army. It is certainly possible that this woman displayed her photograph in her home, perhaps perched on a mantel or on a side table for visitors to see her patriotism and commitment to freedom.

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[536] Quoted in Peter C. Marzio, *The Democratic Art: Chromolithography, 1840-1900—Pictures for a 19th-Century America* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1979), 104.
[537] Selena Sloan Butler, "Heredity," *Spelman Messenger* (June 1897), in Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 4.

Placing portraits of great black men in conspicuous places in the home became an important, perhaps essential, mode of showing one's pride in the race. As Charles Nordhoff noted while visiting homes in Port Royal, South Carolina, that even by 1863, there were "on some walls…pictures from the illustrated journals."[538] Publishers recognized this desire, and responded by producing more prints, not only of single but multiple portraits. Seizing on the monumental election of seven African American men to the US Congress, publishers like Currier & Ives created lithographs depicting these men as educated, refined, and distinguished.[539] An 1881 color lithograph pictured the *Heroes of the Colored Race* alongside important events in black history, including the announcement of emancipation, the creation of black troops, and the establishment of schools. (Figure 4.24) Other heroes graced the walls of many black homes, including that of Frederick Douglass: the 54th Massachusetts, shown storming Fort Wagner in a beautifully colored lithograph.[540] (Figure 4.25) The ideal Victorian parlor, an 1887 manual advised, should include an assortment of chromolithographs alongside figurines, vases, statues, and other small knickknacks.[541] By the turn of the twentieth century, Paul Mullins contends, most black parlors contained a multitude of pictures and graphics, as well as knick-knacks and other small objects.[542] Yet many black parlors mixed such blatantly white visual culture with that representing black history.

An important and generally unrecognized visual genre in black parlors brought together the past and progress of black America into one single artifact: the illustrated

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[538] Nordhoff, *The Freedmen of South-Carolina,* 18.
[539] Currier & Ives were better known for their racist depictions of black life, particularly the *Darktown* series published between 1879 and 1890.
[540] Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Writing America: Literary Landmarks from Walden Pond to Wounded Knee* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 86–87.
[541] Laura C. Holloway, *The Hearthstone; or, Life at Home* (Chicago: L. P. Miller and Company, 1887), 41.
[542] Mullins, *Race and Affluence*, 167.

family tree. Family trees, like the *Afro-American Historical Family Record*, were decorative in form and function, and were meant to be displayed. Decorative family trees were a popular form of visual culture in the late nineteenth century, and by the 1890s, the Historical Publishing Company of Augusta, Georgia, had created an illustrated genealogical chart specifically for black families. Along with picturing a number of famous black men and women, as well as important white figures in American history, the *Family Record* also includes some of the common visual tropes of the transition from slavery to freedom, and from poverty to prosperity.[543] This chromolithograph, so beautifully colored and unique to each family, would have been framed and hung in a prominent place in the home, showing one's pride in America, in the race, and in one's specific family tree. (Figure 4.26) Similarly a family Bible, gilded and bound in rich leather, often sat at the center of a parlor or dining table, an emblem not only of religiosity and freedom but one's family. (Figure 4.27) Representing the rights of literacy and religion that freedom bestowed, a family Bible also served as a genealogical record, as families often recorded their history in the front pages of the holy book. A common practice in nineteenth-century America, writing a family's history (including names and vital dates) was especially important for formerly enslaved people.[544] Long denied the right to keep one's family intact, newly freed people regarded genealogical records as documentation of their great strength in overcoming extreme obstacles.

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[543] Including portraits of white politicians was perhaps an attempt by the publishers to show that African Americans' contributions were on par with those of whites; perhaps it was a means of making black and white a "family" again after the horrors of the Civil War; or perhaps it was just another example of racism, the belief that any American family should celebrate the accomplishments of white leaders as much as black.

[544] Lauren F. Winner, *A Cheerful and Comfortable Faith: Anglican Religious Practice in the Elite Households of Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 168.

The home and objects within it would mean little if black Americans could not keep them secure, could not keep their families safe, and could not maintain a level of privacy. With little security or privacy of domestic space during slavery, black women and men actively pursued these after emancipation. One verse sung at meetings of "Exodusters" repeated the mantra, "We want peaceful homes and quiet firesides; no one to disturb us or turn us out."[545] By renovating their homes and building fences around their property, adding back doors to their houses, securing their dwellings with locks, and keeping guns in or near their homes, black Americans sought the rights of home too long denied to them in slavery. They sought privacy where they could find it. On the Levi Jordan plantation in Texas, for instance, freed families divided one-room cabins into two rooms, giving them more privacy if no more space.[546] Privacy was not just about modesty for the inhabitants; it was also about keeping unwanted individuals out of private spaces.[547] Post-Civil War photographs of Mitchelville clearly show the erection of fences around small plots and homes. Sarah S. Carter's 1866 diary entry, written as she travelled through the South, noted that black families in Hampton, Virginia, also took up this fencing practice, along with the use of dogs to keep out intruders.[548]

For those who remained on the same plantation they had worked in slavery, they made tangible adjustments to these cabins to ensure the freedom of those within. A cabin

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[545] Fleming, "'Pap' Singleton, The Moses of the Colored Exodus," 67.
[546] Brown and Cooper, "Structural Continuity in an African-American Slave and Tenant Community," 13.
[547] As noted in chapter 2, some anti-slavery activists argued that enslaved people had little modesty or morality not because of natural inclinations but because of the lack of privacy provided by owners in their dwellings. Postbellum racial uplift activists continued this trend, arguing that freedmen must use the home to instill the privacy, modesty, and morality they had been too long denied under slavery. Just a few examples include "The Model Home," *Christian Recorder,* August 30, 1883; "The Home," *Colored American*, October 1, 1885; George Henry, *Life of George Henry* (Providence, RI: H. I. Gould, 1894); Charles Alexander, *Battles and Victories of Allen Allensworth* (Boston, Mass.: Sherman, French & Co., 1914).
[548] Sarah S. Carter Diary, ca. 1866, VHS.

from Point of Pines Plantation in Charleston County, South Carolina clearly shows this pursuit in its back door. (Figure 4.28) Structural examination determined that, likely around the time of emancipation, a back door replaced what was before just a window. The family living in this cabin added a back door as a logical renovation and a symbol of their newly found freedom. This is meaningful because many slave dwellings did not includes back doors, as slave owners worried that these out-of-sight passages would undermine their authority.[549] The addition of a back door gave a free black family more liberty to move in and out of their home as they pleased.

Locks would keep unwanted visitors out of their domestic spaces. The Ellis family owned an iron lock and set of keys for their late-nineteenth-century Virginia home, while sixteen padlocks and door & box lock parts were embedded underneath the homes of Mitchelville.[550] (Figures 4.29 & 4.30) Locks were used not only for homes but for spaces of concealment, like trunks and boxes found in the Jones-Hall-Sims house. In a 1979 interview with Tilghman Lee and his wife in the Sugarland Community of Montgomery County, Maryland, Lee remembered that some black homes had door locks, "but they were a different shape then what they have now. They had a big old key would go in there and it had a staple and chain and put that pad lock on it." For families that did not have a padlock, "some of them have a latch…they would put them up and put a string in there."[551] Using whatever was available, black families attempted to secure their homes from intrusion.

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[549] John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities & Design in Early Modern Britain & Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 93.
[550] Butler, Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville, 143–47.
[551] George McDaniel, Phil Mudd, Ann Fitzgerald, Steve Doolittle, and Billy Kelly, "Interview with Tilghman Lee and his wife, May 2, 1979, in the Sugarland community," pg 5, NMAAHC.

Locks were not always effective, and so black men kept something in the house that many Americans deemed essential for home protection: guns. Enslaved men and women were forbidden from keeping firearms without the consent of their owners, and while some may have been able to keep such a secret, most almost certainly did not keep guns in their dwellings. With freedom, many demanded their constitutional right to own a gun. While some historians have seen this as a way of demonstrating manhood through public military rituals, it was also a means of securing the home. In describing how white men had burned down a schoolhouse at Clumfort's Creek, North Carolina, in 1865, the *Freedmen's Record* noted that afterwards, "not a few of the negroes have purchased muskets, with which to dispute the right of the burglar and the assassin, when again he comes that way."[552] It is unclear how most black men came to having such arms so soon after emancipation; some archaeologists contend that, at least in the immediate postwar period, most guns would have been looted, scavenged, or bartered for.[553] This would have been easier for those near Union camps, like Mitchelville, whose artifact assemblage includes 144 objects related to arms.[554]

Black southerners actively sought out other avenues for maintaining the rights of home that had previously been unavailable to them, most especially access to the law and the promised protection of government. Securing houses, land, and other property through the law was an essential step in securing freedom and combatting subjugation in private and public spheres. One of few legal protections granted to freedmen, in wake of

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[552] "Negro Affairs in North Carolina," *Freedmen's Record* 1, no. 9 (September 1865): 143, Huntington Library.
[553] Trinkley and Hacker, "The Archaeological Manifestations of the 'Port Royal Experiment,'" 6.
[554] Most bullets in the assemblage came from Civil War-era military rifles. Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville," 188–89. This arms assemblage size is considered relatively limited. Butler believes that most of the arms artifacts were related to military presence at the site, but that argument does not necessarily mean that black inhabitants did not then assume ownership of such guns. Ibid., 215.

Black Codes and other restrictive laws, was the right to acquire property. Even so, white southerners felt an impetus to keep black individuals from owning land and building homes. The same Black Codes that mandated black citizens "have the right to acquire, own and dispose of property," also stipulated that "right and remedies respecting persons or property…[were] subject, however, to the modifications made by contemporaneous legislation."[555] Regulations against black landownership and rentals were prevalent, especially as the century progressed. Some white organizations, like the Bellefonte Grange no. 15 in Nottoway County, Virginia, composed regulations as to when and how to sell or rent land to black laborers. This was, they declared, a means of "self defence."[556] A host of other economic and social issues put up barriers to black land and home ownership, but this did not deter black Americans from seeking what they believed to be essential to their freedom. W. E. B. Du Bois presented such determination in graph form at the 1900 Paris Universelle Exposition, showing the growth of ownership even against "KuKluxism," "Political Unrest," "Lynching," and "Disfranchisement and Proscriptive Laws." (Figure 4.31)

For those able to purchase land and purchase/build houses, it was essential to use the legal system to maintain those homes. Deeding or willing property to the next generation was a way of making sure that the independence from whites established in one generation could continue in the next. Richard and Rachel Jones transferred official ownership of their property to their sons, John Henry and Dennis Jones, less than one

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[555] John Schreiner Reynolds, *Reconstruction in South Carolina, 1865-1877* (Columbia, SC: The State Company, 1905), 27, 28.
[556] "Resolution on subject labor unanimously passed in Bellefonte Grange no. 15 Aug. 22nd," #255-256, Harvie Family Papers, VHS.

year after purchasing it from George Bruner.[557] Twenty-three years after purchasing 289 ½ acres of land and the home of his former owner in 1862, Enoch Howard sold this property to his son, Greenbury, to insure his legacy passed through his family and not to creditors.[558] Others used wills to pass down furniture, jewelry, and other moveable property that could be too easily stolen using lien laws.[559] Local governments of all-black towns embedded protection of private property into their laws. Mitchelville's local government, for example, was to punish "petty violation[s] of the rights of property and person" and "settle and determine disputes concerning claims for wages, personal property, and controversies between debtor and creditor."[560] Black southerners looked to the federal government for protection of the property and persons, particularly as violence against black homes exploded in the Reconstruction era. White Republicans in Congress spoke out against the invasion and destruction of homes (among other horrific incidents) in numerous speeches, while black victims—during testimony to Congress—expressed their hope and sometimes demands that the federal government intervene to secure their property.[561] Securing the home from violence and seizure were imperative, necessary not only for maintaining any semblance of wealth but also for maintaining family and freedom, two things too often stolen from enslaved women and men within their dwellings.

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[557] Deed of Sale, Richard D. Jones and Rachel Jones to Dennis Jones and Henry Jones, January 25, 1876, p. 283, NMAAHC.
[558] "Statement of Significance," pg. 2, in Maryland Historical Trust, "Gaither/Howard Houses."
[559] Reid, "Furniture Exempt from Seizure," 337.
[560] General Orders No. 3, Hilton Head, S.C. (February 18, 1865), AMA Archives, Document #5523, in Butler, Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville, 27.
[561] For an example of white Republican speeches, see Adelbert Ames, "Enforcement of Fourteenth Amendment: Speech of Hon. Adelbert Ames, of Mississippi, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, April 11, 1871" (Washington, D.C.: F. & J. Rives & Geo. A Bailey, 1871); for black testimony in Congress, see "Memo on the Southern Question," box 1, folders 9–13, J .B. D. Cogswell Papers 1839-1897, AAS.

A patch of land and a home meant freedom. Freedmen, one planter perceptively noticed, would rather "starve and go naked before they will work for a white man if they can get a patch of ground to live on, and get from under his control."[562] Indeed, the homes of Richard and Rachel Jones, Solomon and Sarah Owens, Roseanna and Squire May, and so many other black families—landowning and not—both reflected their freedom and helped secure it. Economics greatly limited the opportunities of many to improve their living conditions, yet from material, textual, and visual evidence, it appears that a great many attempted to do so, seeing it as imperative not only for the personal fulfillment but racial uplift. As Jim Crow increasingly sought to limit the rights of black Americans, they turned not only to the church but also to the home as a place of sanctuary. Even as many built comfort, security, and privacy into their domestic spaces, the racialized ideology of home that underlay white southerners' denial of home rights to black families under slavery continued into freedom. The context of war and reconstruction created a pervasive, conspicuous, and oppressive belief system. The postbellum racialized ideology asserted that black private spaces were open to all white southerners and their attempts to destroy the great hopes that black southerners placed in their free homes.

[562] G. A. N., "Laborers Wanted!" *Southern Cultivator* 25 (1867): 69.

CHAPTER FIVE

"No Home Is Safe, No Place Is Sacred from Their Invasions": White Violence against Black Homes in the Reconstruction South

An African American family prepares supper in their small but comfortable cabin. (Figure 5.1) The matriarch cooks in front of a large hearth, while a young girl and older man observe her culinary skills. Two more children wait for dinner, one impatiently staring at his empty bowl. Symbols of domestic improvement meet the eye: above the hearth hang pictures, to the left a small shelf filled with tableware, and further left, a drawn curtain and with a flowering plant in the windowsill. Yet behind that windowpane creeps a malevolent presence ready to disrupt this pleasant domestic scene. A Ku Klux Klan member surveils the family, while his accomplices in the doorway prepare to attack. One masked man crosses the domestic threshold as he points a gun either at the sitting old man or woman preparing dinner.[563] Both represented what white southern men feared: demonstrations of black women and men's abilities to build and maintain homes, demonstrations of their freedom and unwillingness to continue the old ways of slavery. The surveillance and intrusion of white men into black dwellings sustained slavery. After emancipation, a new wave of intruders, often masked and in secret, attacked free homes with little to no regard for the newfound freedoms of home.

[563] The text accompanying the image declares that the gun is meant "to take the life of the harmless old man who sits at the fire-place," yet the gun could be pointed at the woman, who is taking care of her own family rather than a white one. She represents black women's domestic abilities and thus true womanhood, both of which were denied to black women under slavery. "Visit of the Ku-Klux," *Harper's Weekly* 16, no. 791 (February 24, 1872): 157.

This chapter explores how and why white supremacists targeted black homes to regain social and political control in the Reconstruction South. Through legal and extralegal maneuvers, white supremacists revamped antebellum ideologies and practices that racialized home and violated black dwellings. Although the federal government eventually declared that all lives and property deserved protection, new southern state laws and constitutions passed at the beginning and end of Reconstruction further privatized and protected white homes and property while criminalizing black movement into white private spaces. White supremacists did not consistently hold political and social power during Reconstruction, and thus had to rely on extralegal tactics in their attempts to regain both. Violent methods utilized by slaveholders and their surrogates continued, including the surveillance, intrusion, and containment of black bodies and private spaces. Yet the destruction of slavery transformed conceptions of paternalism that had previously lent a semblance of protection to black dwellings. White supremacists of all classes entered dwellings at will, committing atrocious acts. No longer were black dwellings open only to slave owners; in the Reconstruction South, white southerners regarded black homes as rightfully open to them, as spaces in which to demonstrate and demand their political and social power. These legal and extralegal attacks on black homes fostered white supremacy and furthered its goals, for attacks on the home ultimately were attacks on the rights and freedom of black southerners. Black southerners knew that particularly severe actions could be challenged using newly won rights, thereby prompting national conversations regarding the federal government's role in protecting homes. The domestic drama of racial violence in the Reconstruction South

reveals the interconnected nature of public and private, and the centrality of the home to the era's most important public and political debates.

In the past decade, scholars have revolutionized understandings of Reconstruction-era racial violence.[564] Traditional historiography, including that of Allen Trelease, tended to focus solely on why organizations like the Ku Klux Klan emerged in the South and how prevalent and organized they were there.[565] New and already seminal work from Elaine Parsons on the formation of the Ku-Klux reveals that the narrative of racial violence was national and required both men in white hoods and a national press.[566] Additionally, traditional scholarly investigation overwhelmingly used white sources, ignoring the centrality of the black experience to racial violence. Yet recent scholarship, especially that of Kidada Williams, uses essential black testimony to understand violence and its consequences.[567] Other studies, including that of Hannah Rosen, have explored the gendered nature and rhetoric of racial violence.[568] Yet Rosen and others do not treat, at length, the centrality of home to white and black southerners, nor do they track the long history of these violent practices and the ideologies that underlay them both before and after Reconstruction. This chapter seeks to connect the violent mechanisms of control utilized by both ante- and postbellum white southerners, as well as further explore the importance of home as idea, space, and structure within this violence.

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[564] In addition to those mentioned below, see Carole Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
[565] Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
[566] Elaine Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
[567] Kidada E. Williams, *They Left Great Marks On Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).
[568] Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

At the end of official hostilities, the South lay in ruins.[569] With the horrific death toll of the War, with southern cities and plantations wasted, with the formerly enslaved now free, southerners contemplated exactly who they would be.[570] Indeed, as Elaine Parsons notes, "The Civil War created a crisis in identity."[571] What would this New South produce? What would it look like? What would it stand for? No longer would elite white men have sole control over the answers to these questions; freed women and men demanded that their voices be heard, a point of great concern to those who wished to uphold values of the Old slave South. Newly freed people demanded new forms of labor organization along with compensation, thereby necessitating changes.[572] They sought out changes to the old labor and social regime through new avenues, including unconstrained movement, the legal system, and specific government entities like the Freedmen's Bureau. Reconstruction seemed to promise radical changes upheld by a sympathetic

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[569] For more on how ruin and destruction affected all areas of life after the War, see Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012). It should be noted that recent scholarship has pushed back the end date of the war. Gregory Downs argues that the US Army continued to fight the war of emancipation in the South until at least 1871, when Congress returned to full strength, the last military district closed, and the last state (Georgia) was readmitted to the Union. Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[570] For more on death in the Civil War, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008); Jim Downs, *Sick From Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[571] Parsons, *Ku-Klux,* 14.

[572] Much remained the same in the several decades after emancipation. From a macro perspective, as Gavin Wright has shown, the South remained a low-wage regional market in a high-wage national economy for decades after the War. Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997). In regards to on-the-ground labor organization, while sharecropping and tenant farming were categorically different from slavery, due to the presence of contracts and compensation, a number of similarly exploitative elements remained in the major rural labor forms of the postbellum South. Julie Saville, *From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina 1860-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

federal government.[573] The rights to life, liberty, and property—as well as the right to maintain private, safe homes—were finally to be available to all Americans.

While some worked to build a new world, one that made good on America's declarations of freedom and rights, others sought to rebuild a South dependent on racial privilege and oppression. The defeat of the Confederacy and the death of slavery were traumatic experiences for white southerners. Social upheaval spawned sincere anxiety and fear for those with so much social power to lose.[574] During and after the war, as black men and women asserted their rights, white southerners treated the formerly enslaved with contempt varying from derision to revulsion. While the war still raged, slave owners bluntly expressed their disgust for those they formerly regarded as family. Kate D. Foster, writing in her diary as her family's enslaved women and men left her side, angrily snapped in 1863 that, "I think negroes are a lot of ingrates."[575] Migrating black women and men represented change.[576] After Matilda, one of her enslaved domestic laborers, left her side, Foster condescendingly declared that, "all [enslaved laborers] will go whensoever it pleases their majesties."[577] The use of this aristocratic term for a former slave signifies the major upheaval that white southerners believed emancipation would bring. If the new South was a world where a black woman was queen, what would that make a white woman?

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[573] The best exploration of Reconstruction's radical potential is still Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).
[574] Mark Wahlgren Summers, *A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
[575] Kate D. Foster Diary, pg. 12, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RL), Duke University.
[576] As Yael Sternhell has argued, not all black migration was voluntary or beneficial. Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[577] Kate D. Foster Diary, pg. 12–13, RL.

Whether slaveholding, yeoman, or impoverished, an overwhelming majority of white southerners accepted, if not supported, the institution of slavery and the social structure it created. With slavery's demise, the bi-partite framework that placed white over black, regardless of economic or social status, faced serious threats, causing concern particularly for those who had little beyond their white skin. Contempt for newly freed people, then, extended beyond the slaveholding class to yeomen and poor white men who had hoped to see their power grow and their position solidified after the war. Yet white southerners had to compete with black men and women for jobs, land, and position in postbellum southern society. Not only did freedpeople exercise their rights by, as in the case of Matilda, moving at will; they demanded wages, purchased land, and voted. By 1868, in the states of Mississippi and Arkansas, interim Secretary of War Ulysses S. Grant wrote that, "The extension of suffrage to freedmen has evidently aroused a sentiment of hostility to the colored race…which did not exist before." Grant went on to note that "if the [military] protection [of black Americans] is withdrawn, the white men now controlling would withdraw with it; and some of the southern people, now exasperated at what they deem the freedmen's presumption, would not be very gentle towards them."[578] Ultimately the military presence would be withdrawn, and Grant's prediction would prove true. As Judge Augustus R. Wright of Rome, Georgia, put it to a congressional committee in 1871, "It is difficult for a white man to regard the rights of a negro with the same sacredness as that of a white man."[579] The derision white southerners

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[578] "Extract from General Grant's Report as Secretary of War ad interim, Referring to Reconstruction, November 1867," in Edward McPherson, *A Political Manual for 1868, Including a Classified Summary of the Important, Executive, Legislative, Politico-Military, and General Facts of the Period, From April 1, 1867, to July 5, 1868* (Washington, D.C.: Philp & Solomons, 1868), 316, American Antiquarian Society (AAS).

[579] "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' Georgia, (p 104-151), 1871," pg. 116, Folder 11, Box 1, Cogswell Papers, AAS.

expressed toward freedmen went beyond words. As Eric Foner has argued, white men were determined to define the meaning of freedom and to limit black individuals' access to it, and they did that in part through violence.[580] Indeed, white anger, hostility, and anxiety turned into violence against the bodies, minds, and homes of black citizens.

Along with public targets such as churches and schoolhouses, white violence targeted black homes. In various areas of the South, a white supremacist uprising emerged by 1868, and this subversive crowd focused on the physical evidence and emblems of black freedom and progress. Based on the testimonies of black victims it is clear that most often this violence took place at night in rural areas, conducted alternatively by the Ku-Klux, smaller unidentified groups, or by single white individuals.[581] The outrages typically occurred in remote parts of the country, generally unpopulated plantation areas rather than in urban or semi-urban areas with concentrations of black southerners.[582] As discussed in chapter one, in the antebellum era, many large plantation owners rearranged black dwellings into nucleated settlements set out along streets to better surveil their enslaved. With emancipation, however, the evolving sharecropping and tenant systems encouraged the dispersal of black dwellings, spreading out cabins and limiting contact between families. Black women and men greatly desired a plantation landscape that would limit or stop the violent tactics of surveillance, intrusion, and containment so prevalent under slavery. Yet, as Michael Fitzgerald has noted, the new dispersed settlement of black houses facilitated the racial violence of the postbellum

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[580] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 120.
[581] Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 120; Williams, *They Left Great Marks On Me,* 21. Large scale attacks, such as the 1866 massacres in Memphis and New Orleans, did take place, but were less frequent than small isolated attacks.
[582] Testimony of G. M. Wells, "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' Mississippi, (p 193-281), 1871," pg. 280, Folder 13, Box 1, Cogswell Papers, AAS.

period.[583] In the dark of night, with miles between each dwelling, white terrorists could secretly conduct their violent attacks.

This practicality is one of many motivations for violence against black homes: attacking physically isolated homes decreased the possibility that help would arrive for the victim. These domestic attacks perhaps drew from the charivari tradition of early modern Europe, wherein costumed, raucous groups targeted homes of offending community members. In the antebellum and war-time South, houses were sites of such collective nighttime attacks.[584] Additionally, the discursive power of attacking homes was not lost on white supremacists. Attacking black men performing their civil rights, like voting, in public spaces would draw attention to their role as political actors. Domestic attacks were also a method of subverting the 15th amendment and other federal civil rights legislation. The defense for accused Klansmen in the 1871 South Carolina Klan trial argued that the right to vote could only be infringed during the actual act of voting. By breaking and entering the home of Amzi Rainey, the men only intended to burglarize Rainey, not to prevent his voting, which the court ruled constituted a completely different crime.[585] Yet attacking domestic spaces was indeed an attack on one's rights, in this case one's property rights. Additionally, attacks on black homes, Hannah Rosen argues, were attacks on the manhood and womanhood of the inhabitants.[586] As John Emory Bryant, President of the Freedmen's Convention of Georgia, proclaimed to a gathering of

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[583] Michael W. Fitzgerald, "The Ku Klux Klan: Property Crime and the Plantation System in Reconstruction Alabama," *Agricultural History* 71, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 188.
[584] For more on charvari in the Old South, see Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984)*, 161; Parsons, *Ku-Klux,* 4–5.
[585] United States Circuit Court (4th Circuit) South Carolina, *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C. : in the United States Circuit Court, November term, 1871* (Columbia, SC: Republican Printing Co., 1872), 18–19, Huntington Library.
[586] See especially chapter 5 of Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 179–221.

freedmen on January 13, 1866, "you claim yourselves the rights, conceded to white men, to select your associates and protect your wives and daughters," and "true manhood demands that you do it."[587] It was in the home that black men and women performed gender roles that would support their claims to citizenship and freedom. By preventing black men from protecting their family in the home, and by enacting sexual violence upon women to debase their virtue, white supremacists could further challenge the claims of black individuals for rights and equality.

But even besieged free black homes maintained a meaning different than slave dwellings. Even though many black individuals could not afford to purchase land or build their own dwellings in the decade or so after the Civil War, their homes represented freedom. "The sole ambition of the freedman at the present time," a northerner traveling through South Carolina noted in 1865, "appears to become the owner of a little piece of land, there to erect an humble home, and to dwell in peace and security at his own free will and pleasure…in one word to be free to control his own time and efforts without anything that can remind him of past sufferings and bondage."[588] White southerners understood freedpeople's acquisition of land and homes as a clear sign of social change. Public proclamations of southern and northern men, black and white, indicate that many Americans believed that the ownership of land and the maintenance of "true" homes were essential elements to the realization of freedom and rights. From speeches to small freedmen's organizations to those in front of the US Congress, postbellum Americans

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[587] John Emory Bryant, Speech to the Freedmen's Convention of Georgia, January 13, 1866, pgs. 2, 7, Box 7, John Emory Bryant Papers (Bryant Papers), RL.
[588] A. Warren Kelsey to Edward Atkinson, September 9, 1865, in Eric Foner, "The Meaning of Freedom in the Age of Emancipation," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 2 (September 1994): 459.

seemed convinced that the acquisition of true, good homes was an essential duty for men and women.

Indeed, manhood and womanhood—two things white society attempted to deny black southerners—stemmed from the home, and with freedom came the possibility or, from many perspectives, the necessity of showing one's aptitude for creating and maintaining homes. Manhood, so often associated with the traditional public and political rights, was in fact intimately connected with the home in this era, extending from the antebellum belief that domestic mastery conveyed public power.[589] In May 1867, William D. Kelley, Republican Congressman from Pennsylvania, addressed a crowd of freedmen in Montgomery, Alabama, enjoining them that while they "have not always had the right to protect your wife," their freedom "not only gives that right, but makes it your duty to do it…and to put over her head the roof of your own home."[590] Likewise, it was in the home that women established their true womanhood, and women's domestic duties would provide the foundation for a better, more equal society. As the black Philadelphia newspaper *The Christian Recorder* affirmed in 1861, "The social well-being of society rests on our homes, and what are the foundation stones of our homes but woman's care and devotion."[591]

Freedom encouraged the construction of homes, and homes would in turn ensure the freedom of those who built them. White southern men worried about former chattel performing domestic duties that would demonstrate their freedom. One former slave owner complained that, "Those negroes who used to belong to me are all keeping house,"

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[589] Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 181–82.
[590] "Address at Montgomery, Alabama," in William D. Kelley, *Speeches, Addresses, and Letters on Industrial and Financial Questions* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1872), 168.
[591] "Woman and Home," *The Christian Recorder*, June 8, 1861.

a sign that they would demand their rights to build and maintain homes, which were the bulwark of their freedom.[592] Additionally, as explored in the previous chapter, the materiality of black homes—the structures and objects within—were physical reminders of black southerners' freedom and their capacity for consumer citizenship. Land and houses afforded individuals the opportunity to control their own labor and lives. Indeed, many Americans intertwined the right to property with the right to life; as John Scott of Pennsylvania put it when considering the rights of person and property, "they are so intimately blended that I cannot consider the one without the other."[593] No wonder that not only their lives but their homes and property more generally were of central concern for both black and white Americans.

As a symbol and physical indication of slavery's demise and the possibilities of universal freedom, black homes became prime targets for racial violence. In Smith County, Texas, Klansmen attacked and robbed the homes of the area's freedpeople nearly nightly for months.[594] As H. C. Thompson noted in 1869 about similar violence in Raleigh, North Carolina, these attacks caused black citizens to be "perfectly terror stricken, afraid to lisp a word or leave their cabins, & may have not had a quiet nights rest for weeks."[595] Targeting them at home hit black families where they hoped to finally find privacy and security. White men knew this. In counties in northern Tennessee, white

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[592] Letter from unsigned [probably E.J. Thompson], undated [likely 1865], Box 4, Benjamin Sherwood Hedrick Papers (Hedrick Papers), RL.
[593] *Protection of Life, etc., at the South: Speech of Hon. John Scott, of Pennsylvania, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, March 22 and 23, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: F. & J. Rives & Geo. A Bailey, 1871), 7, AAS.
[594] James M. Smallwood and Barry A. Crouch, "Texas Freedwomen during Reconstruction," in *Black Women in Texas History,* eds. Bruce A. Glasrud and Merline Pitre (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 46.
[595] From Brother Henry (H.C. Thompson) to Mary Ellen Hedrick, November 22, 1869, Box 8, Hedrick Papers, RL.

supremacists posted anonymous broadsides on the doors of freedpeople's cabins that declared their intention to surveil the spaces and activities of black southerners. The "I Am Committee" circulars told "White men and negro, I am everywhere."[596] Posting it specifically on the doors of freed people, even if they could not read, indicated the political nature of the home. Indeed, many attacks on black homes were political in nature, meant to change a black man's vote from Republican to Democrat, or to dissuade him from voting at all. A federal order issued on April 4, 1868, noted that vigilantes used "violence and intimidation, to alarm and overawe a large part of the population, and by this means affect the results of pending elections in this district."[597] White supremacists knew that the formerly enslaved desperately wanted protection and privacy in the home, and believed they would give up voting to maintain it or even move to find it (thus increasing the likelihood that the antebellum social order could be re-established). Republican Oliver P. Morton proclaimed in an 1870 speech to Congress that innumerable black families "have been compelled to leave their homes for their personal safety and fly for their lives."[598] By targeting black homes, by instilling fear and anxiety about the security of black homes, white supremacists hoped to stop other activities that demonstrated their rights and growing power in public.

But beyond explicitly political motivations, white supremacists targeted homes because they wished to damage or destroy the physical evidence of slavery's demise and emancipation's potential. As Booker T. Washington later argued, culture in the home was

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[596] "I Am Committee" broadside, in *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era,* eds. Ira Berlin and Leslie S. Rowland (New York: The New Press, 1998), 189.
[597] Excerpt from order of General Meade, in McPherson, *A Political Manual for 1868*, 320.
[598] *Speech of Hon. O. P. Morton, of Indiana, on the Bill for the Admission of Georgia, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, April 14, 1870* (Washington, D.C.: Chronicle Print, 1870), 9.

one of the most important ways to "prove the Negro a man among men."[599] Along with the cultured activities of home, the refined objects and structures that comprised home were indications of one's position in society and aptitude for progress. So when white supremacists targeted this material evidence and emblem of freedom, they sought to further degrade the black men and women who called it home. The destruction of black property was thus an important element of the racial violence of Reconstruction. Samuel Allen, a black magistrate and shoemaker from Caswell County, North Carolina, testified that not only had he been shot and run out of his house, but a band of men had the next night returned to destroy his property. Life *and* property was not safe; as Allen asserted, "We do not feel secure at all."[600] Likewise, with her family watching nearby, the Klan burned Harriet Simirl's house to ground on their third visit to her dwelling.[601] As Louisville's *Courier-Journal* professed, under Ku-Klux rule, "No home is safe, no place is sacred from their invasions."[602] By intruding into black homes, spaces meant to be private and even sacred, white supremacists sought to deny black Americans their rights, their citizenship, their freedom.

These attacks against black homes, and thereby black rights, took place during the first time in American history when the federal government sought to protect *all* lives, liberty, and property. White supremacists circumvented this national effort through legal and ideological gymnastics, developing laws alongside new conceptions of paternalism and home that further privatized and protected white homes at the expense of black. A

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[599] Booker T. Washington, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Life and Work* (Toronto: J. L. Nichols & Company, 1901), 166.
[600] *Protection of Life, etc., at the South: Speech of Hon. John Scott*, 15.
[601] *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 501.
[602] *Ku Klux Outrage: Speech of Hon. John Sherman, of Ohio, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, March18, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: F. J. Rives & Geo. A. Bailey, 1871), 9, AAS.

broad anxiety spread through the South after the war, as white men and women wondered about what freedom would bring. During slavery, they had feared slave rebellions and violence. After slavery, they feared a new form of rebellion and social upheaval that would take place not only in the ballot box and state capitol but in their homes.

While white southerners of various classes feared what freedmen's acquisition of homes and property might mean for their position in the southern economic and social structure, an intense and pervasive anxiety about the security of their own homes and property spread. Writing to her brother from Chapel Hill in June 1867, Mary Ellen Hedrick noted that, "Many fear, & I believe others may believe, land & houses will be divided among negroes and poor whites."[603] The same message came from state governments: Governor Benjamin Humphreys of Mississippi set out a proclamation in September 1867 noting that, "communications have been received at this office…expressing serious apprehensions that combinations and conspiracies are being formed among the blacks, 'to seize the lands and establish farms, expecting and hoping that congress will arrange a plan of division and distribution,' 'but unless this is done by January next, they will proceed to help themselves, and are determined to go to war.'"[604] Black violence against white property became a rallying cry for white supremacists. As Michael Fitzgerald argues, emancipation produced personal anxiety over property, which fueled political grievances and a racial coalition of white individuals interested in limiting the rights and progress of black Americans.[605] White southerners painted an image of

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[603] Letter from Mary Ellen Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, June 7, 1867, Box 6, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[604] "XXVII. Digest of Orders of the Military Commanders, and General Action under the Reconstruction Acts," in McPherson, *A Political Manual for 1868*, 322.
[605] Fitzgerald argues it was not attempts to control labor but rather concern over small-scale theft of white property, particularly guns and livestock, that led to the growth of the Klan in northern and western Alabama. Fitzgerald, "The Ku Klux Klan," 190.

black southerners as indolent thieves, an image that contradicted the evidence of black southerners' acquisition of property and homes. John Hedrick of Spring Grove, North Carolina, wrote to his son Benjamin in October 1865 that, "things are so unsettled…There is so much stealing. I lost one mule. We have to keep our horses and mules locked for there is so many negroes loafering about…I cannot describe the state of affairs."[606] One year later, E.J. Thompson wrote to Benjamin from Chapel Hill that, "The negroes are stealing and breaking open houses constantly."[607]

White supremacists used this anxiety over the security of white homes and property to justify their legal and extralegal maneuvers. They used the law to inscribe white homes as private and secure in opposition to black homes. Almost immediately after the official end of hostilities, a number of southern states (still under conservative white rule) passed harsh black codes that included not only vagrancy statutes but trespassing violations targeted, though not explicitly, at black individuals. These black codes reveal the attempts by white southerners to codify a racialized definition of domestic privacy. The 1866 South Carolina codes, for instance, expanded the definition of a dwelling to include all buildings within two hundred yards of a residence, making arson or burglary of any plantation building a capital offense. Louisiana black codes helped white southerners regulate who could and could not be on their property, declaring that, "any person who entered a plantation without permission was guilty of trespassing and subject to a fine of up to $100 and/or imprisonment for thirty days."[608] Blacks did not

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[606] Letter from John Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, October 12, 1865, Box 4, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[607] Letter from E. J. Thompson to Benjamin Hedrick, March 17, 1866, Box 5, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[608] Exactly what comprised a plantation changed over time, was rather arbitrary and often locally defined. Historian Charles S. Aiken notes that the 1910 US Census defined "plantation" through three elements that historically distinguished a plantation from a farm: "a large landholding, large labor force, and centralized management." This definition noted that a plantation must include least five tenants or $1000 spent on

respect privacy, white citizens feared, and so they further criminalized trespassing, as in the case of Florida, where (even though much of the state's criminal law was "color blind," as historian Donald G. Nieman argues) they made a harsher punishment for trespassing. Vagrancy laws were in fact inflected by this racialized definition of home and privacy. South Carolina law defined a vagrant as someone who did not have "some fixed and known place of abode, and some lawful and reputable employment," or, in other words, someone who needed to be but could not be properly surveiled. If one did not have a place to live, the law defined him or her as a vagrant, and in most southern states could be forced into labor contracts.[609] New laws promoted the surveillance of black bodies and spaces. In certain southern states, including Mississippi, postbellum black codes required freedmen to obtain written evidence documenting their place of residence or labor, a legal mechanism to ensure the continued surveillance of black bodies and spaces.[610]

When some states discovered Congress's intention to pass a Civil Rights Act, which they did in April 1866, they pulled back on the black codes and amended their proposals. But, as historian Donald G. Nieman has argued, even though states removed discriminatory language and included language replicating Congress's Civil Rights Act, these measures still unfairly targeted freedmen and women.[611] New state constitutions, such as that adopted by Mississippi in 1868, included specific provisions mimicking the 4th amendment, confirming that the "people shall be secure in their persons, houses and

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wage laborers per year. Charles S. Aiken, *The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 37.

[609] Donald G. Nieman, *To Set the Law in Motion: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Legal Rights of Blacks, 1865–1868* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979), 84–89.

[610] "Act to Confer Civil Rights on freedmen &c., Nov. 25, 1865," quoted in "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' Mississippi, (p 193-281), 1871," pg. 278, Folder 13, Box 1, Cogswell Papers, AAS.

[611] Neiman, *To Set the Law in Motion*, 95.

possessions, from unreasonable seizure, or search."[612] But in practice this protection seemed to apply more to white homes than black. In January 1871, a North Carolina paper responded to a recent conviction of some seventeen black men for arson of white property: "Let these villains understand that the heaviest penalty known to the law will be imposed, and arson and other outrages will soon cease."[613] While invasion of white homes and burning of white property would be severely punished, most of the southern states overlooked the widespread white on black property crime. As Elaine Parsons notes, white men self-identifying as Ku-Klux drove thousands of black families from their homes between 1866 and 1871.[614] It is likely that those men damaged or destroyed many of the black homes they invaded, yet, based on discussions of violence at the congressional level, rarely did state or local governments bring suits against them. As Senator John Scott made clear in his speech to the upper chamber in 1871, "No member of the white Ku Klux organization has been convicted of any crime committed by them in North Carolina, down to this hour."[615] Indeed, corollaries protecting black homes and criminalizing white intrusion did not develop.

Beyond the legal realm, white supremacists also used accusations of black criminality to justify their violent extralegal tactics. The potential of black crime against white property bred a pervasive fear of black bodies in white private spaces. Benjamin Hedrick's family in Spring Grove, North Carolina, grew "very alarmed" when they saw a

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[612] *Constitution and Ordinances of the State of Mississippi: Adopted in Convention Assembled in Pursuance of the Reconstruction Acts of Congress, and Held by Order of General E.O.C. Ord, in the City of Jackson, in 1868* (Jackson: Mississippi State Journal Office, 1868), 24, AAS. North Carolina included similar prohibitions as part of its declaration of rights. *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of North-Carolina, at its Session 1868* (Raleigh: Joseph W. Holden, 1868), 167, AAS.
[613] *Protection of Life, etc., at the South: Speech of Hon. John Scott*, 19.
[614] Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 6.
[615] *Protection of Life, etc., at the South: Speech of Hon. John Scott*, 20–21.

black man appear several times on the family plantation, including once when said man escaped from under their house.[616] Benjamin's brother, John, expressed that his family members "have negro on the brain so bad that they are inclined to see a negro when none are near."[617] His sister Martha, in fact, "lost her reason," experiencing severe mental trauma "caused by the appearance of the negro" so near her home.[618] Others in the area felt similar anxiety; John related that, "Mr. Triplets' father was affected a good deal in the same way some years ago. He was unable to sleep for eleven days and nights in suspicion."[619] Black bodies became associated with criminality in the minds of white southerners, which they argued justified violence against those bodies. Henry Thompson of Chapel Hill recalled in an August 1869 letter that a group of white men illegally took two black boys out of a jail—where they had been kept for allegedly burning down white men's barns—and shot them.[620] In October 1869, Mary Ellen Hedrick wrote from Washington, D.C., to her brother in North Carolina that, "The Ku Klux Klan in Orange hung those two negro men supposed to have fired those barns."[621] Indeed, white southerners connected black bodies with property destruction to the point it became a way of framing black citizens. In July 1869, Henry Thompson wrote that the KKK, who had just murdered a black man in his North Carolina house, burned down a white man's barn "thinking the work would be charged upon the negroes in retaliation for the murder of Murphy Reeves."[622]

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[616] Letter from John A. Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, April 25, 1871, Box 9, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[617] Letter from John A. Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, May 9, 1871, Box 9, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[618] First quote, Letter from John A. Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, April 25, 1871, Box 9, Hedrick Papers, RL; second quote, Letter from John A. Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, May 22, 1871, Box 9, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[619] Letter from John A. Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, May 22, 1871, Box 9, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[620] Letter from H.C. Thompson to Benjamin Hedrick, August 10, 1869, Box 8, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[621] Letter from Mary Ellen Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, October 24, 1869, Box 8, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[622] Letter from H.C. Thompson to Benjamin Hedrick, July 26, 1869, Box 8, Hedrick Papers, RL.

Even the supposition of black criminality against white property led to violence. In May 1871, Ku Klux broke into the home of Elias Hill, a disabled formerly enslaved man from York County, South Carolina, and beat him under the pretense that he burned white-owned homes and farm buildings. Even as Hill denied it, the Klan beat him, dragged him into the yard, and proceeded to search his home for incriminating evidence. They found nothing.[623] H. C. Thompson wrote to his sister in November 1869 that in Raleigh, North Carolina, the Democrats "say 'we can't live without the K. K. K. to protect us. Our hogs, sheep, & cattle have been butchered & stolen by the negroes & now the K. K. have stopped all stealing & rouging.'"[624] The protection of white property, these white southerners argued, could only be maintained through the violent tactics of white supremacist groups. John Scott, Republican senator from Pennsylvania, spoke to the upper chamber in March 1871 about the lack of protection for the lives and property of black southerners. He related the story of Caswell Holt, a formerly enslaved but "respectable, well-behaved colored man," who lived in a small log cabin on the land of Colonel Jerry Holt in Alamance County, North Carolina. A group of armed men attacked Caswell in his home, pulling him from his dwelling, tying him to a tree, and beating him until blood flowed. When Caswell told his landowner about this injustice, the Colonel simply told Caswell that, "he must be mistaken about this; that it is a mystery." The Colonel later testified that, "My impression is that there was no insecurity felt by persons who were law-abiding and behaved themselves."[625] The Colonel implied Caswell's

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[623] Hans S. Trefousse, *Reconstruction: America's First Effort at Racial Democracy* (1955; repr. Hungtingon, NY: Krieger, 1979), 138–46.
[624] From Brother Henry [H. C. Thompson] to Mary Ellen Hedrick, November 22, 1869, Box 8, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[625] *Protection of Life, etc., at the South: Speech of Hon. John Scott*, 18, 19.

criminality, and the justification of violence against his body and home because of it. Individuals and groups of white men used violence "to rectify the conduct of the negro class," or, in other words, to reinvigorate antebellum control mechanisms like surveillance and intrusion into private spaces.[626]

And so it was to protect their own homes that white southerners claimed they invaded and destroyed those of black southerners. Even some who opposed southern racial violence argued that black freedom and Republican politics created "a situation of terror, from which [white] men rush into secret societies for defense of homes, mothers, sisters, wives, and children." Samuel S. Cox, Representative from New York, maintained that while he did not defend these actions of the Ku Klux, his fellow Congressman must ask themselves, "Can we not understand why men, born free, should rise, or, if not rise with safety, that they are compelled to hide in Ku Klux or other secret clans, and strike against this ruin and desolation, peculation and violence"?[627] Albertus Hope testified before the South Carolina Klan trial that he went to a local Klan meeting because he feared for his property and family, having to walk his yard several nights to ensure no black men committed "outrages," specifically arson.[628] Simply put, Hope declared, "I was in the Klan, which we organized for protection—to protect my house and family."[629] Osmond Gunthorpe concurred, noting that the Klan oath demanded that members "protect widows, female friends, and their houses."[630] Julia Rainey also acknowledged a

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[626] "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' Mississippi, (p 193-281), 1871," pg. 246, Folder 13, Box 1, Cogswell Papers, AAS.
[627] *Enforcement of fourteenth Amendment--Ku Klux legislation--Force and freedom: Speech of Hon. Samuel S. Cox, of New York, delivered in the House of Representatives, April 4, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: F. & J. Rives & Geo. A Bailey, 1871), 7, AAS.
[628] *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 172.
[629] Ibid., 446.
[630] Ibid., 461.

"great deal of disturbance and uneasiness" that caused her to be "afraid of having my house burned."[631] Fear for the safety of their homes and bodies, this argument supposed, led Ku Klux and other white terrorists to bring down that same violence against the homes and bodies of black southerners and their Republican allies.[632] Potential limits on the privacy of white homes led to limits on privacy in black.

As is clear, violence used by slaveholders to uphold the system of slavery continued during Reconstruction. Isaac Lane, bishop of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, asserted in his 1916 memoir, "Slavery was abolished, but all of its attending evils did not pass with it."[633] Yet undoubtedly much was different in the postbellum than antebellum era, the reality of wage labor being a significant difference for both former enslaver and enslaved. Obviously many employers now felt little compunction in articulating and enacting the kind of paternalism that had provided at least a semblance of protection to black bodies and homes, protection not from the owners themselves but from other unwanted individuals. Slavery, as some scholars have argued, did not die so much as transform into a new exploitative labor regime, and along with it came a shift in the relationship of owner, now employer, to slave, now employee.[634] Some proclaimed they would no longer "take care" or "provide" for formerly enslaved people, such as a

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[631] Ibid., 289–91.
[632] Although these Republican allies were often white, they were easily relabeled as race traitors or as black in their own right. John A. Hedrick, a white Republican in North Carolina, wrote to his brother Benjamin in April 1867 that he had been called "a Black Republican," and had "no particular objection" to such a label. White republican homes were also labeled as black, and therefore open to surveillance, intrusion, and destruction by white supremacists. Letter from John Hedrick to Benjamin Hedrick, April 19, 1867, Box 2, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[633] Isaac Lane, *Autobiography of Bishop Isaac Lane, LL.D. with a Short History of the C.M.E. Church in America and of Methodism* (Nashville: Printed for the author, Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, 1916), 17.
[634] For example, see Saville, *From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina 1860-1870*; Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

former slave owner who noted in an 1865 unsigned letter that, "I will go to the Poor house before I will house their fuzzy heads."[635] Many of the labor contracts of tenant farmers and sharecroppers did include lodging, food, clothing, and other provisions strikingly similar to those provided in slavery. The Harvie family, for instance, included lodging on their property in Amelia County, Virginia, as a part of at least ten labor contracts with formerly enslaved workers, some providing housing for individuals and others for families.[636] But rarely did these employers provide *protection* of black bodies or spaces from unwanted intruders, as many had during slavery, compelled as they were by a combination of paternalism, property rights, and economic incentive. Bill Lindsay, a black South Carolinian, told jurors in the 1871 federal Ku Klux Klan trial that the white owner of the land Lindsay worked and called home refused to provide protection to those living there.[637]

The economic incentive for providing protection certainly lessened with the abolition of slavery. As Congressman Harry Barry maintained in an 1871 speech, "In their former condition of slaves their property value to their masters was their protection against rough treatment by the rabble. But that basis of protection exists no longer."[638] Even the formerly enslaved felt this shift in paternalism, the release of a white need to protect black homes. Essic Harris, a freedman from North Carolina, told a congressional committee that, "In slave times, when I had a master, if a man had knocked my door

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[635] Letter from unsigned [likely E. J. Thompson], undated [likely 1865], Box 4, Hedrick Papers, RL.
[636] The following labor contracts included "house" or "houseroom" along with wages and (typically) other provisions: #2841 (Amelia Burton), #2845 (Sally Claiborne), #2846 (Richard Craddock), #2850, (Richard Hardaway), #2852-55 (Bugg Jefferson), #2856 (Abram Johnson), #2860 (Cornelius Scott), #2861 (James Smith), #2868 (William Thomas), #2863 (James Thompson). All in section 11, Harvie Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.
[637] *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 308.
[638] *Ku Klux Democracy: Speech of Hon. Henry W. Barry, of Mississippi, delivered in the House of Representatives, April 5, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: F. & J. Rives & Geo. A Bailey, 1871), 9, AAS.

down they would have got him, even if he had been here in Washington City. The colored people are worse off now than when in slavery."[639] While many employers owned the black tenant and sharecropping cabins on their property, and still maintained an interest in employing healthy laborers, the kind of paternalism that had led them to protect black dwellings from unwanted intruders under slavery was now unnecessary. Sharecropping and tenant contracts do not go into detail about who was responsible for upkeep of these cabins, but if owners required their laborers to maintain their houses, the economic incentive for protecting these spaces would be little. Black domestic spaces were now open to all white men.

Thus a shift in the antebellum racialized ideology of home, specifically as it pertained to who had access to black domestic spaces, occurred in the Reconstruction era. Crossing the black domestic threshold was now a privilege of whiteness rather than a privilege of mastery. In testimonies of black victims, a few related that intruders did first ask that the door be opened to them.[640] Yet much more often, white men demanded that a dwelling be opened to them. Bill Lindsay, whose own house was a target of the Klan, remembered that the disguised men "hallooed, 'wake up nigger, wake up nigger, I am coming—open the door, open the door, God damn it, open the door.'"[641] Demanding entry, however, points to the fact they believed these spaces should be open to them. Frequently, they uttered no words; white men simply knocked down doors of black homes. Charles W. Foster, a former Klansman in South Carolina, remembered certain

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[639] Testimony of Essic Harris, "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' North Carolina, (p.1-32), 1871," pg. 9, Folder 9, Box 1, J .B. D. Cogswell Papers, AAS. Harris is referred to as "Essic" on page 9 and "Essick" on page 10. Neither appeared in a search of the 1870 Census, so I simply chose the name that came first in the testimony.

[640] See, for instance, the testimony of Amzi Rainey and Dick Wilson in *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 279, 282.

[641] Ibid., 308.

"visits" commencing by residents opening doors, but as often they broke down doors to get inside and look over the house. And in one night, Foster and his fellow Klansmen "visited" and violated at least six black homes.[642] Anna Parkes remembered Klansmen visiting her mother, telling a WPA interviewer that, "some mens come walkin' right in Ma's house without knockin'."[643] The story of Charles Smith of Walton County, Georgia, indicates white men's belief that they had the right to access black homes. The Klan shot, whipped, and ran Smith out of town for several months, and on his return home, they greeted Smith by knocking down his door. "They would come in on you," Smith declared in October 1871, as if these white men needed no permission to cross the black domestic threshold.[644] The Ku Klux also broke in the door of Jim Williams, among "divers other houses of colored people" the disguised men "visited," which they considered a "good night's work."[645]

Alongside this new understanding of black homes as open to all white men, a new form of paternalism arose in the Reconstruction era, one that insisted white control of black bodies and spaces, including intermittent violence against both, was the most effective method of ensuring the protection of black individuals and homes.[646] While a number of former owners refused to provide any protection to black families, others still

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[642] Ibid., 487–91.
[643] Anna Parkes, WPA Slave Narrative Project, Georgia Narratives, vol IV, pt 3, Federal Writer's Project, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 163.
[644] "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' Georgia, (p 104-151), 1871," 130, Folder 11, Box 1, Cogswell Papers, AAS.
[645] *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 164. See also Ibid., 232, 236–37, 279, 282.
[646] Scholars do not often discuss the continuation of paternalism after the end of slavery, seeing those two things as necessarily intertwined. Exceptions include George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 204–5. Frederickson does not see this new paternalism as necessarily negative, but rather as a way of coaxing black southerners to work. Others assert that newly freed people refused to allow the continuation of paternalism. See Ian D. Ochiltree, "'A Just and Self-Respecting System'?: Black Independence, Sharecropping, and Paternalistic Relations in the American South and South Africa," *Agricultural History* 72, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 352–80.

claimed a paternalist belief in their duty to provide security, even if for their own profit.[647] The best way to protect black individuals, these new paternalists claimed, was to join the Klan or other organizations that would maintain close surveillance and control of unruly black men and women. Albertus Hope claimed to have joined the Ku Klux Klan in order to protect "the colored people, upon my place, against the white people raiding round."[648] Hope's paternalism, meant to protect *his* black laborers, supported the broader belief that white men had the right to enact control over black domestic spaces. These paternalists, in ways similar to the antebellum iteration, considered the intrusion and surveillance of black homes as a form of protection. Much as urban reformers in the North justified their intrusions into poor homes by their "benevolent" reform intentions, white southerners also saw their intrusion of black homes as a way of enacting their own kind of benevolent reform. Through this new paternalism and a belief in white men's right to black spaces, the surveillance and intrusion into black homes, which in slavery had been open to slaveholders but closed to other unwarranted whites, was a right of all white men. This new privilege of whiteness contributed to a classless white solidarity, wherein white men of any economic station embodied privileges not granted to black individuals.

This new racialized ideology of home—which declared white homes as private and protected and black homes as open—contradicted the federal proclamations that black Americans were citizens deserving of the rights of domestic and bodily protection. Black women and men knew this, and actively fought against this injustice by testifying

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[647]Michael Fitzgerald, for instance, argues that some planters evinced a desire to protect their laborers and thus their own profit during Klan violence in northern and western Alabama. Fitzgerald, "The Ku Klux Klan," 201.

[648] *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 446.

about the violence they experienced at the hands of white supremacists. They drew both on these more modern declarations of independence that emphasized a government's obligations to uphold citizenship rights and on more traditional "declarations of dependence," as historian Gregory Downs puts it, that framed one's relationship to the state in terms of protection.[649] Forums created by federal officials and institutions, including the Freedmen's Bureau and the congressional hearings on Klan violence, gave black women and men opportunities to publically narrate their experiences, condemn the actions of white perpetrators, and seek redress.[650] This testimony reveals, as Kidada Williams has argued, how black Americans conceived of themselves and their past, present, and future.[651] In these narratives, they built their history and proclaimed their values. They asserted their own ideology of home, a belief system that declared their demands and ability to shield their home and those within from harm. Edward Holman of Mississippi declared black people's intention and desire for privacy: "The colored people…only want to be let alone."[652] Jim Williams of South Carolina was one of these people determined to find some privacy, claiming that, "these white people…didn't let him alone."[653] Unless these white men let him alone, he proclaimed his intention to bring

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[649] Gregory Downs, *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861–1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Laura F. Edwards has made clear that the Civil War and Reconstruction muddied the seemingly incompatible conceptions of individual rights, state rights, and government responsibilities. See Laura F. Edwards, *A Legal History of the Civil War and Reconstruction: A Nation of Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[650] For more on the Freedmen's Bureau and their capacity to as a public forum of testimony, see *Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations,* eds. Paul Allen Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999). For more on congressional Klan hearings, see, for example, Lou Falkner Williams, *The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871-1872* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

[651] Williams applies Edward Baptist's concept of "vernacular history." Williams, *They Left Great Marks On Me*, 8.

[652] "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' Mississippi, (p 193-281), 1871," pg. 217, Folder 13, Box 1, Cogswell Papers, AAS.

[653] *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 339.

his militia to their neighborhood to gain some peace and a piece of land. These threats, claimed William Bratton, a black man in Williams's militia, came from the fact that "the Ku Klux, came down into that settlement, and bothered the colored people." Williams's retaliation for the constant white intrusion and violence against black bodies and spaces would be to enact the same against white: "he would commence Ku Kluxing white women and children; gin houses, barns and stables with fire." These demands, and his intention to back them up with action, would get Williams killed.[654]

But black demands for privacy—"to be let alone"—would prompt a discussion of the government's role in protecting citizens in their own homes. Those like Essic Harris, who testified before a federal committee, would seek to make the federal government protect him and his property, asking the State to be more proactive in defense of black Americans. Frequent proclamations citing the government's duty to ensure the "peace" harkened back to earlier, communal understandings of the law rather than individual citizenship rights. These common law understandings had allowed for the participation of enslaved individuals in the legal process, something that had faded throughout the antebellum era as rights rhetoric grew ever more prominent.[655] The "protection" and peace rhetoric, in some ways, communicated subordination and a kind of acceptance of the paternalistic ideology that underpin it. Yet including these peace- and protection-based arguments brought black individuals back into the legal system as yet another way to establish those rights they had not held when enslaved. As early as 1867, when the Klan murder of George W. Ashburn in Georgia became national news, federal officials

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[654] Ibid., 368.
[655] See Laura F. Edwards, *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-Revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

proclaimed their duty "to protect them in the peaceable enjoyment of their homes and property, and in the exercise of their personal rights and political privileges."[656] The first Republican Governor of Mississippi, J. L. Alcorn, for example, passed a set of resolutions in 1870 that included the criminalization (felony) of a masked person or group of persons who invaded a house without the express permission of those inside.[657] Yet, as Senator Adelbert Ames of Mississippi noted, the governor had not indicated if any person or persons had actually been punished, prompting him to ponder whether "this Republic, with all its vaunted power and greatness, cannot protect it own citizens."[658]

In St. Augustine, Florida, the owners of a home that had been invaded brought a case "for a violation of the peace in entering by force and violence, and without pretence of law, and forcibly ejecting the persons and property of the loyal and lawful occupants and representatives of the owner of the premises." Florida Justice Dobgerry, however, "failed to find any law in the statute-books making it an offense to enter a house unlawfully" and dismissed the case.[659] Congressman Benjamin Butler, who had received correspondence about this incident, railed against it in Congress, noting that if it was actually true that no Florida law existed to prevent the forced entry of armed persons onto another's property, "is it not time that a bill were passed making an unlawful banding

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[656] "XXVII. Digest of Orders of the Military Commanders, and General Action under the Reconstruction Acts," in McPherson, *A Political Manual for 1868*, 320. *Harper's Weekly* ran a fictionalized image of the murder, thereby making it national news. In an unexpected turn, Ashburn's murder led to the ratification of the 14th Amendment in Georgia, when the federal government offered not to prosecute the elite white men indicted in the murder if the state ratified the amendment. The first of many Klan acts of terror against bodies and homes in Georgia in fact helped secure the power of black Georgians to appeal to their rights of property and home.

[657] *Ku Klux Organization: Speech of Hon. Adelbert Ames, of Mississippi, in the United States Senate, March 21, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: F. & J. Rives & Geo. A Bailey, 1871), 4, AAS.

[658] Ibid., 8.

[659] Letter to Benjamin Butler, March 24, 1871, in *Ku-Klux Outrages in the South, The Work of the Democratic Party: Speech of Hon. Benj. F. Butler, in the House of Representatives, April 4, 1871* (Washington, D.C.: M'Gill & Witherow, 1971), 13.

together to do any act to deprive any citizen of the United States of the peaceable enjoyment of life, liberty, and property, guaranteed him by the Constitution," including the right to private, safe homes, "a crime under the laws of the United States, so that the Constitution may become operative to give the citizens peace and protection under it?"[660] Butler's comments point to a mixture of old common law and new rights-oriented perspectives, emphasizing the importance of communal peace alongside individual rights. The government had the duty of upholding *all* citizens' rights of home, which in many ways were in fact derived from English common law (i.e. castle doctrine). Butler declared that "every man's right, however humble, should be respected, and every roof-tree, however lowly, should be the safe castle of refuge for its occupant, from Mason and Dixon's line to Mexico."[661] Similarly, Governor Holden of North Carolina, wrote in March 1870 that, "Every citizen, no matter of what color, or how poor or humble, has a right…to be absolutely at peace in his own house."[662] W. P. Bynum of North Carolina brought a bill against seven or eight men for unlawfully entering a home, but violent threats of retribution forced prosecutors out of the state before the case came to trial.[663]

The Enforcement Act of 1870 finally made clear that it was a crime for two or more persons to forcibly enter "the premises of another, with intent to violate any provision of this act, or to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any citizen with intent to prevent or hinder his free exercise and enjoyment of any right or privilege granted or secured to him by the Constitution or laws of the United States."[664] The council for

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[660] Ibid., 13–14.
[661] Ibid., 22.
[662] Testimony of Dr. Jones, "Memo on the 'Southern Question,' North Carolina, (p.1-32), 1871," pg. 2, Folder 9, Box 1, J .B. D. Cogswell Papers, AAS.
[663] *Ku Klux Outrage: Speech of Hon. John Sherman*, 11.
[664] Section 6, Enforcement Act of 1870.

indicted Klansmen in South Carolina argued that the federal government, in fact, had no right to do this: "There is no Act of Congress to secure a man against searches and seizures. It is declared to be a right in the Constitution; so is the right to personal liberty, and a thousand other rights, that are sacred rights, recognized by the Constitution of the United States. But I cannot go to a Federal tribunal to vindicate them."[665] The prosecution argued that the Enforcement Act did, in fact, provide protection by the federal government for persons and property, including that of Amzi Rainey and other black men and women. But the presiding judge agreed with the defense, arguing that, "The right to be secure in one's own house is not a right derived from the Constitution, but it existed long before the adoption of the Constitution at common law, and cannot be said to come within the meaning of the words of the Act 'right, privilege or immunity granted or secured by the Constitution of the US.'"[666] Here, the judge distinguished (rather than conflated) the common law basis of the castle doctrine from constitutionally protected rights. The court thus pronounced the prosecution's argument invalid, thereby discarding attempts to appeal to the 4th amendment rights of citizens.

White men throughout the South used violence to proclaim their position, seeking to negate the newly established rights of black southerners, reestablish a racial hierarchy, and build a new stronger white coalition. Black dwellings had been essential stages for the assertion of white supremacy during slavery, specifically of an elite white supremacy; this stage would continue to be central, but would be one where white men of various classes could enact and declare their supremacy over black individuals and their

[665] *Proceedings in the Ku Klux trials at Columbia, S.C.,* 30.
[666] Ibid., 91–92.

solidarity with whiteness. The stage would shift with the ascension of Democratic conservative governments and the end of Reconstruction, after which the idea of home became the primary battleground. As Jim Crow emerged, white supremacists firmly engrained their ideology into the political, economic, and social mechanisms of the US South. In this new era, black women and men faced new forms of racial violence no longer confined to secretive, nighttime raids on black homes. Public spectacles like lynching became the violence *du jour,* though attacks on black homes continued. This violence against black homes shifted to include not only physical violence but cultural violence: white supremacists adopted the image and symbol of black homes, past and present, to advance their Lost Cause ideology throughout the nation. Yet black Americans continued their constant resistance of such campaigns against black homes. From international photographic expositions to illustrated memoirs to racial uplift campaigns, black activists took up the cause of the black home to refute the work of white supremacists.

CHAPTER SIX

"Pictures of the Old Cabins":
Past and Present Black Homes in the Movements of White Supremacy and Racial Uplift

In the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, some person picked up a postcard entitled "Cabin in a Cotton Field," likely with the intention of inscribing a message to a friend or family member. (Figure 6.1) Scanning the postcard image, which depicts black laborers picking cotton in front of a small paneled log cabin, there is little that reveals exactly when this scene took place. Is this a picture of slavery or freedom? Is that a slave cabin or a sharecropper's cabin? Such ambiguity was commonplace in depictions of postbellum black homes.[667] (Figure 6.2) For at least a half century after slavery's legal end, the image of a small ramshackle log cabin, particularly when paired with black bodies, evoked slavery as much as freedom and, crucially, the continuity between them. Both racial uplift activists and white supremacists recognized that ambiguous picturing of black dwellings collapsed the very real and important distinctions between slavery and freedom. And both utilized these images for divergent purposes, one to fight for a new equitable social system and the other to uphold the old unjust one. Picturing the black home was not just an artistic endeavor; it was a political tool that could be used to establish power in the tumultuous transition from slavery to freedom.

Through the end of the nineteenth century, as the concurrent hopes and violence of Reconstruction transformed into the pernicious Jim Crow South, the black home

[667] It continues to be; archivists often label such dwellings as slave cabins, regardless of the fact that the overwhelming majority of photographs can be dated after 1865. See Figure 6.2.

remained a focal point of black and white Americans with very different agendas. The movements of racial uplift and white supremacy utilized physical and visual evidence of past and present black homes to assert divergent perspectives on America's racial, social, political, and economic makeup. Circulating publications, exhibitions, conventions, postcards, and photographs fueled a widely shared belief that the one-room log cabin was an emblem of slavery and backwardness. White supremacists embraced this archive and endeavored to further intertwine the past and present black home. They continued to build an image archive of text and visuals that presented black Americans and their homes as inept and inferior. By manipulating history and images of home, past and present, white supremacists argued that black Americans were either unable or unwilling to progress past their former status as slaves. This white supremacist image archive supported their attempts to re-instate the social structure of slavery by focusing on the black home. Racial uplift activists, on the other hand, sought to dissociate contemporary and future black Americans from this housing form. Like white supremacists, they utilized the image of the slave cabin, but did so to distance contemporary and future black Americans from it, thereby reinforcing the real and potential progress of their people. Black activists built an alternative image archive to improve not only the image of the black race, but their people's standing in the American system. Additionally, racial uplift advocates, particularly black women, worked to physically eradicate slavery's persistent dwelling form from the southern landscape. Centering their work on the elimination of the one-room cabin and uplift of the home, elite and middle-class black female activists appropriated white bourgeois values as they attempted to negate the racist system that supported such values. This chapter reveals that visual, material, and ideological black

homes—both historical and contemporary homes—were central to the ways late-nineteenth-century Americans argued for their competing visions of the nation's future.

Black churches, schools, and the press have long been at the center of how scholars narrate the struggle against Jim Crow.[668] But, as had been the case for nearly a century, the home was central to the freedom struggle, and continued to be pivotal to how African Americans' conceived of lasting and meaningful social change. Historians have yet to position the home as central to black Americans' activism against Jim Crow. The traditional narrative, which emphasizes the church and school, is incomplete without the home. Speaking to the congregation of Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church (which would more than half a century later become famous as the church from which Martin Luther King, Jr., helped lead the Civil Rights Movement), Abraham Lincoln DeMond declared in 1900 that, "There are three things that above all other the Negro has worked and prayed and hoped for, his church, his school and his home."[669] Indeed, these three arenas were intertwined. As the *Southern Workman*, a magazine produced by the Hampton Institute (a school founded for the education of freed people and native Americans), suggested in 1902, "the emphasis in the education of the colored race ought to be placed on those things that help toward the establishment and the maintenance of

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[668] This literature is vast, but even that on black women's politics in the era overwhelmingly focus on these three public arenas, and rarely address the specific intersections of these arenas with the home and its issues. See, for example, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Martha S. Jones, *All Bound Up together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Teresa Zackodnik, *Press, Platform, Pulpit: Black Feminist Publics in the Era of Reform* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011).

[669] Abraham Lincoln DeMond, "The Negro Element in American Life: An Oration Delivered by the Rev. A. L. DeMond, in the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, Jan. 1, 1900" (Montgomery, AL: Alabama Printing Company, 1900), 20.

good homes."[670] Yet in that same *Southern Workman* issue, W. E. B. Du Bois made clear that improving the lives of black Americans could never be simply about education in schools: "We suffer in the South from the curious delusion that schools, public and private, can do everything toward lifting the Negro."[671] Booker T. Washington, in recounting the 1892 Tuskegee Conference, urged "our ministers and teachers to give more attention to the material condition and home life of the people."[672] Black Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century focused on home—as image, idea, and structure—as they fought against the injustices of Jim Crow America.

Black and white activists with divergent motives tapped into a widely shared visual literacy, one that associated dilapidated one-room cabins with slavery and blackness. Nineteenth-century technological innovations in printing spread this association throughout the United States and Atlantic World as part of the more general visual culture of slavery.[673] While there was no single experience of slavery, there was a common way of representing it through image and text. Beginning in the late eighteenth century with the development of a trans-Atlantic anti-slavery movement, many of the writers, activists, and artists who depicted slavery in various areas of the New World used a common visual language.[674] Phillip Lapansky describes at least three categories of

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[670] "Country versus City,' *Southern Workman* 31, no. 2 (February 1901): 57.
[671] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; VI, The Southern City Negro of the Better Class," *Southern Workman* 31, no. 2 (February 1902): 71.
[672] Booker T. Washington, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Life and Work* (Atlanta: J. L. Nichols & Company, 1901), 263.
[673] For more on the development of print culture technologies, see Patricia Mainardi, *Another World: Nineteenth-Century Illustrated Print Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).
[674] As Albert Boime argues, slavery became an integral part of the larger visual culture of the nineteenth century, thereby shaping how blackness, slavery, and freedom were understood. Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990). For more on an Atlantic-wide visual culture of slavery, see *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*, eds. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

slavery visualization consistently used by abolitionists, including the 1789 Brooks slave ship, the Wedgewood kneeling slave, and various atrocities including whippings and the separation of slave families.[675] (Figures 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5) Art historian Marcus Wood adds two other visual tropes: the iconography of slave escape and of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[676] (Figures 6.6 and 6.7) Integral to many of the images within these categories was something unrecognized by these and other scholars: the slave cabin.

Particularly within the literary manifestations of abolitionism—including domestic novels, poetry, and slave narratives—the slave cabin functioned as a central image from which the reader was to "experience" the horrors of slavery.[677] Artists, writers, and other cultural producers typically presented slave dwellings in the same light: dilapidated log cabins with a single disheveled, dirty, and uncomfortable room, often inhabited not by family but by random individuals forced to make these terrible living conditions livable.[678] This does not describe every slave dwelling within anti-slavery discourse; Uncle Tom's cabin, for example, was a comfortable and spacious home, but

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[675] Phillip Lapansky, "Graphic Discord: Abolitionist and Antiabolitionist Images," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, eds. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 201–30.

[676] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[677] For more on how the visual (in both image and text) shaped one's relationship to slavery, see chapter 1, Jasmine Nichole Cobb, *Picture Freedom: Remaking Black Visuality in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 28–65; chapter 4, Erica L. Ball, *To Live an Antislavery Life: Personal Politics and the Antebellum Black Middle Class* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 81–108.

[678] Some of the many slave narratives that describe the poor dwellings inhabited by the enslaved include Charles Ball, *Fifty Years In Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: 1859); John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Now in England* (London: 1855); Martha Griffith Browne, *Autobiography of a Female Slave* (New York: E. O. Jenkins, 1856); Lewis Garrard Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clarke, During a Captivity of More Than Twenty-Five Years* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1845); Francis Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or, Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1863); Josiah Henson, *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life: An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom"), from 1789 to 1876* (London: 1876). WPA narratives also typically describe slave dwellings in this way.

Harriet Beecher Stowe used that shining example of a slave dwelling to emphasize the drastic disparities of living conditions possible under the institution.[679] Of course this literary and visual trope did not describe the conditions of all enslaved people; indeed, the variety of dwellings and sleeping spaces for enslaved people throughout the American South and beyond was vast. Yet abolitionists, as well as pro-slavery writers, typically used a one-room cabin to represent the living space of enslaved people, thereby unintentionally creating the idea that this was *the* housing type for enslaved men and women.[680] The diversity of living conditions was in part lost through propaganda that offered readers the easier-to-digest image of the slave cabin as a one-room log cabin.[681]

Of course, America's visual culture associated other individuals and groups with log cabins. In particular, William Henry Harrison and Abraham Lincoln used log cabin imagery for political purposes.[682] (Figures 6.8 and 6.9) Recognizing its capacity to demonstrate personal progress, nineteenth-century "self-made men" branded their beginnings as humble by incorporating the log cabin into their biographies. An 1886 article in the *Youth's Companion*, for instance, noted that the "little gray cabin" was the

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[679] Stowe depicts Tom's first dwelling as one would of an aspiring middle-class American: a comfortable, clean cabin with pictures on the walls and a "*drawing-room*" in the corner. Stowe later describes how Tom expected the same of the quarters at Simon Legree's plantation, but was crestfallen when he saw the "rude shells, destitute of any species of furniture…[and] foul with dirt." Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Company, 1852), 40 (emphasis in original), 182.

[680] Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright have noted that artists depicting the domestic lives of the enslaved typically did so by showing enslaved individuals gathered inside living quarters or in front of a cabin. Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright, *Images: Iconography of Music in African-American Culture, 1770s-1920s* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 30–31.

[681] As scholars have shown, particularly with the use of archaeological evidence, the make-up of domestic units was very diverse for enslaved people. See Whitney Battle-Baptist, "A Space of Our Own: Redefining the Enslaved Household at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage Plantation," in *Household Chores and Household Choices: Theorizing the Domestic Sphere in Historical Archaeology*, eds. Kerri S. Barile and Jamie C. Brandon (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

[682] For more on the political use of log cabin imagery (especially on objects), see "Political Ephemera," in *Material Culture in America: Understanding Everyday Life*, eds. Helen Sheumaker and Shirley Teresa Wajda (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 352. Biographers continue to link the log cabin image with Lincoln, as is obvious by the inclusion of "Log Cabin" in numerous recent titles.

type of "dwelling Lincoln, Grant, Garfield, Blaine, Jeremiah Black, Webster, Andrew Jackson, Hawthorne, Emerson, Poe, and among men of affairs, Astor, Girard and Vanderbilt, were born...where their ambition and strength first had birth."[683]

Yet the circulating visual and textual images of slavery had, by at least the mid nineteenth century, also connected the log cabin with the peculiar institution. This idea and image of the small cabin as the one dwelling type for the enslaved circulated around the Atlantic World. Not only did popular illustrated books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* move this image around the Atlantic; the material culture produced around the book and later play, including engravings, needlepoint, wallpaper, and transferware plates, often featured small log cabins as the singular slave dwelling.[684] (Figure 6.10) The presence of black bodies, cotton fields, or particular phrases—often involving "Uncle" or "Aunt" in reference to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the southern practice of using familial names for certain enslaved laborers—further linked such images to slavery.[685] After the legal end of slavery, cultural products like memoirs, novels, travelers' accounts, sketches, paintings, photographs, postcards, and plays (including the wildly popular theatrical version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) very often pictured a log cabin as the quintessential slave dwelling.

Lost Cause advocates, who created much of this cultural production, recognized that by linking the history and image of slavery with the small log cabin, they could advance their ideology and their white supremacist ambitions.[686] White supremacists had

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[683] "The Little Gray Cabin," *Youth's Companion* 59, no. 34 (August 26, 1889): 326.
[684] See John W. Frick, *Uncle Tom's Cabin on the American Stage and Screen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 21.
[685] William Gleason has also found the use of such phrases to associate a cabin with slavery. William A. Gleason, *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 191.
[686] For more on the Lost Cause and cultural production, see K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

long utilized the visual world to promote their ideology by circulating images that cultivated stereotypes of black incompetence, slothfulness, criminality, and licentiousness.[687] These stereotypes were useful in propelling the passage of harsh *de jure* limitations on black freedom and rights, not to mention the *de facto* effects of such images. By the late nineteenth century, those men and women wishing to uphold a social system based upon the suppression of black freedom had created a visual archive of black ineptitude. This archive included high- and low-end drawings and photographs of black women, men, and children, all of which have been the overwhelming focus by historians and visual cultural scholars studying race and image.[688] But white supremacists also visualized past and present black homes as they built an image archive to support their political and social activism.

To further intertwine the connection between log cabins, slavery, and contemporary black southerners required that white supremacists manipulate the past and present. The Lost Cause offered two different histories of black dwellings, both of which served the same end. The first represented the slave dwelling as a satisfactory if not comfortable dwelling, a contrast to the poor living conditions of contemporary black Americans. The second showed slave dwellings as dilapidated one-room cabins, a dwelling type that continued on the southern landscape. While one-room cabins were still the prevalent domestic form of rural black southerners, significant evidence of progress

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[687] Richard Siegesmund, "On the Persistence of Memory: The Legacy of Visual African-American Stereotypes," *Studies in Art Education* 48, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 323–28; Jo-Ann Morgan, "Mammy the Huckster: Selling the Old South for the New Century," *American Art* 9, no. 1 (Spring, 1995): 86–109.

[688] The work of Deborah Willis and Shawn Michelle Smith tends to focus on faces and bodies, but their methods and theories are applicable to much more. Smith's work has been especially helpful in conceiving of a particularly American visual archive of dwellings constructed, in part, by the racial, gendered, and ethnic ideas swirling through the nineteenth-century United States. See, for instance, Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

in black housing would have met the eye of most late-nineteenth-century southerners. Yet Lost Cause ideologues ignored contemporary progress to instead show how the dwellings of slavery continued to fill the southern landscape. With these two histories, white supremacists showed that either black Americans could not handle freedom or that they were unable to progress past it. Black Americans were therefore better off in slavery, or at least under the paternalistic care of an omnipotent employer. By manipulating the image of past and present black homes, white supremacists continued their efforts to build a racist society.[689]

Invoking the visual and textual archive that incorrectly showed one-room cabins as *the* enslaved dwelling type, Lost Cause promoters distorted history so as to repeat it, in particular a society built upon the backs of black labor and unfreedom.[690] Wade Hampton, Confederate cavalry leader and Democratic politician from South Carolina, declared to the newly formed Southern Historical Society in 1873 that, "History repeats itself, and history is philosophy teaching by example."[691] Hampton and his fellow Lost Cause ideologues demanded that their version of history be accepted by southerners and disseminated across the nation and world.[692] Images of or in black homes functioned as

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[689] Not all Lost Cause ideologues were willing to invoke the "moonlight and magnolias" image of the Old South, but instead sought to advance a belief in modern progress to prove white supremacy. See Peter S. Carmichael, "New South Visionaries: Virginia's Last Generation of Slaveholders, the Gospel of Progress, and the Lost Cause," in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 89–126.

[690] For more on myth, Lost Cause, and writing southern history, see the two volume *Myth and Southern History*, eds. Patrick Gerster and Nicholas Cords, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

[691] "The Southern Question: The Conflict between the Two Civilizations," ca. 1883, Box 7, John Emory Papers, Rubenstein Library, Duke University. For more on Wade Hampton and the Lost Cause, see Charles J. Holden, "'Is Our Love for Wade Hampton Foolishness?': South Carolina and the Lost Cause," *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, 60–88.

[692] The international reach of the Lost Cause can be seen through the work of women's organizations and southern memoirs. See, for example, *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory,* eds. Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); "In Dreamland: The Confederate Memoir at Home and Abroad," in Coleman Hutchison, *Apples and*

evidence for white supremacists to narrate the history of the Old South. As historian David Blight has made clear, the Lost Cause was a set of beliefs in search of a history.[693] White supremacists found a potent historical source in images of black homes.

One of the motivations of Lost Cause ideologues writing history was to correct what they saw as false interpretations of the southern past, particularly the institution of slavery.[694] The 1901 issue of the Lost Cause-addled *Publications of the Southern History Association,* a short-lived historical organization founded in 1896, contained a lengthy diatribe against false representations of slavery, claiming that "no single phase of life or civilization has the South been so misunderstood and misrepresented as on the subject of slavery." In this article, entitled "The South in the Olden Time," J. L. M. Curry set out to correct these false accounts, particularly that the "relation of master and servant was not one, generally, of hardship or cruelty." As Curry argued, the physical well-being—the "food, clothing, shelter"—of the enslaved was of great importance to owners.[695]

Focusing on living conditions of the enslaved, including their dwellings, allowed white supremacists to present these as facts and their narrative as the true history of the South. Lost Cause writer James B. Avirett composed his 1901 *The Old Plantation: How We Lived in Great House and Cabin before the War* with the intention of describing "the exact relations between the two races…[including] the character of the houses in which

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Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 173–204.

[693] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

[694] For more on the historical societies and associations of the South, culminating in the 1934 founding of the Southern Historical Association, see Bethany L. Johnson, "The Southern Historical Association: Seventy-Five Years of History 'in the South' and 'of the South,'" *Journal of Southern History* 76, no. 3 (August 2010): 659.

[695] J. L. M. Curry, "The South in the Olden Time," *Publications of the Southern History Association* 5, no. 1 (January 1901): 44–45.

they both dwelt."[696] Juxtaposing the white dwelling as the "great house" and the black dwelling as the "cabin," Avirett sought to racialize those disparate architectural types. Avirett pictured most slave cabins as well-built and comfortable dwellings; if poorly kept houses existed, that was only due to an inhabitants' own "neglect [of] order, system and the laws of cleanliness."[697] The slave cabin—and thus slavery—appears as the "correct" living situation for black families. If families were not happy there, it was not due to the owner but rather to their own inability to function as upright, virtuous individuals. Slave dwellings, from these interpretations, were satisfactory if not comfortable dwellings, very different from those one-room cabins that dotted the southern landscape.

This Lost Cause history continued the pro-slavery tactic, described in chapter 3, of describing and comparing the slave and free black home through the material conditions of dwellings. Pro-slavery literature often compared comfortable southern slave cabins to dilapidated free black homes. Arguing that free black homes and their inhabitants were deficient or deviant suggested that black Americans were incapable of handling freedom.[698] In fact, these images seemed to argue that black Americans were more enslaved, more oppressed and exploited, when they were legally free than when they were the property of other people. Similarly, Lost Cause advocates compared slave

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[696] James B. Avirett, *The Old Plantation: How We Lived in Great House and Cabin before the War* (New York: F. Tennyson Neely Co., 1901), 6.
[697] Ibid., 47.
[698] Charles Jacobs Peterson's (pseudonym J. Thornton Randolph) popular 1852 pro-slavery response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* deftly compared the good lives and pleasant homes of enslaved men and women to the destitution and desolation of free black homes in the North. The book included visual images of the good homes provided under slavery: the cover and title page pictured a happy black family in front of a well-built plank cabin with thatched roof, obviously representing life under slavery. The image is similar to the title page image for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, perhaps a nod to Stowe's representation of Uncle Tom's cabin as a comfortable, clean, happy cabin (until Tom is sold). (see Figure 6.7) J. Thornton Randolph, *The Cabin and Parlor; or, Slaves and Masters* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson, 1852), 24 (slave cabin description), 123 (free home description).

cabins to contemporary black homes, providing evidence for their belief that black Americans had been better off in slavery. In the weekly magazine *Outlook*, Eleanor Tayleur asserted that slavery had provided homes but few black women in freedom could replicate it: "Whatever the burdens and wrongs of slavery, and they were great and many, it at least gave the negro woman a home in which she was sure of food and warmth and privacy…but now, when the negro must pay rent for the roof that shelters him, whole hers of them crowd together in a single room, like rabbits in a warren, without regard to age or sex or consanguinity. Under such conditions all privacy, or even decency, is impossible."[699] Free black families, then, were in fact worse off than in freedom than they had been in slavery, a point pro-slavery writers frequently mentioned in the antebellum era.

Some white organizations like the Women's Baptist Home Missionary Society took a special interest in working-class southern black homes, motivated in many ways by the same impulses as northern urban organizations to "improve" tenements. Indeed, the Baptist Training School's mission was to "go into the homes in our own land," including the "homes of the freed people" and foreigners.[700] At the Society's annual meeting in 1881, the work of white women in black homes in Columbia, South Carolina, was praised, for "the one great need of free people was homes." Even while some black

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[699] Eleanor Tayleur, "The Negro Woman: I.—Social and Moral Decadence," *Outlook* 76, no. 5 (January 30, 1904), 267. Scholars have focused on Tayleur as a racist social critic in the ways she discussed the black female body and mind, but have yet to look at how her descriptions of home likewise contributed to her argument against the progress of black women. See, for instance, Martha H. Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois Pres, 2005), 64–66; Teresa C. Zackodnik, *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 101; Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 163–65.

[700] Women's Baptist Home Mission Society, *Minutes of the 11th Annual Meeting and Report of the Executive Board* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons, 1888), 5.

South Carolinians had accumulated property, "many had houses who had not homes."[701] In this way, they denied that the spaces that many called home were not, in fact, homes, as they did not live up to white bourgeois ideals. Indeed, these white women declared that black Americans were unable to create homes without the help of white people, and thus black women and men needed some form of paternalism to have true homes. Uplift language, like the protectionist language discussed in the previous chapter, communicated subordination even as it affirmed the importance of black homes.

On the other hand, Lost Cause ideologues also used the history of the slave cabin to argue for continuity rather than change. In 1904, the same year Tayleur wrote, a statistical report on black farmers maintained that the continued presence of one-room cabins could be read in a way that black Americans simply wanted to "maintain the standard of living derived from the slave quarters." If "A windowless, one-room cabin…satisfied his creature wants," than it would appear that his former status (represented by the one-room cabin) satisfied the desires of black men and women.[702] Indeed, the well-known racist Alfred Holt Stone claimed to the American Economics Association that, "If a family lives in a one-room cabin, it is a matter purely of choice; there are hundreds of a different kind to be had."[703] If free black Americans lived in one-room cabins, that indicated their decision—perhaps even their desire—to live as they had in slavery. White supremacists therefore justified their position that black Americans in

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[701] Women's Baptist Home Mission Society, "Minutes of Annual and Special Meetings, and Annual Reports of Corresponding Secretary during the First Five Years," in Ibid., 12.
[702] Katherine Coman, "The Negro as a Peasant Farmer," *Publications of the American Statistical Association* 9, no. 66 (June 1904): 45. This report generally asserted the intention of black Americans at the turn of the century to gain land by diligence and thrift, but also subtly contained some Lost Cause perspectives.
[703] Alfred Holt Stone, "The Negro in the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta: Account, Debts, Credits," at the Fourteenth Meeting of the American Economics Association (Baltimore, 1902), 250.

fact desired the paternalism of slavery, and by extension its economic and social underpinnings. In this way, Lost Cause ideologues argued that emancipation was, in fact, a mistake. If these men and women refused to advance past slavery, they were meant to be slaves. These white supremacists were battling not only over the meaning of the black home, but over the meaning of the Civil War and emancipation so as to maintain a society based on white privilege.

Lost Cause ideologues thus muddled the temporal boundaries between the past and present, between slavery and freedom, to demonstrate the truth of their position. And they did so through image as well as text. Stereographs—a popular media form in the mid to late nineteenth century—offered consumers a particular view of southern black homes. "Characteristic Southern Scenes" and other stereograph series visualized black individuals and families standing near shabby, small log cabins; both the people and the dwelling seem stuck in slavery. (Figure 6.11) One stereograph features a black woman with eleven children in front of a ramshackle clapboard house. Below the photograph is the caption "No Mas'r; Not 'cause I Married young, but I is a Fas' Breeder," as well as the date, 1895. (Figure 6.12) On the reverse, the text is translated into five languages. (Figure 6.13) The image and caption imply that the captured scene took place in slavery, yet the media form and copyright date directly counter this, demonstrating that the scene is actually one of freedom. That the publisher translated the stereograph caption into five languages shows the reach that Lost Cause advocates hoped such images, and the implied argument about the unwillingness or inability of black Americans to progress, would have. Additionally, racist advertising demonstrated the ineptitude of black individuals, especially women, in the home. (Figures 6.14, 6.15, and 6.16) Meant to provoke laughter

from viewers, these images of black women's domestic incapability denied them any progress from their enslaved past. They built a white supremacist visual archive.

White supremacists therefore used images (both in textual and visual forms) of black homes to argue that black Americans were either unable or unwilling to progress past their former status as slaves. These arguments rested on the presumption that the systematic oppression of black Americans as second-class or non-citizens should be maintained in freedom. These racist images of and in the black home served the Lost Cause's nefarious purpose of demonstrating the "natural" and inevitable status of black Americans as inept and inferior, thereby negating the rights they had obtained after the Civil War. By building the image archive of inept and inferior black Americans, white supremacists used the black home to support their attempts to re-instate the social structure of slavery.

While Lost Cause ideology undergirded much of the cultural production that linked the log cabin with slavery, racial uplift activists also utilized the log cabin imagery and its association with slavery. But black activists did not deploy this historical imagery to uphold the structures of slavery; they did so to destroy it, to replace it with an equitable system of freedom, rights, and citizenship for all. In their struggle, black Americans continued to regard the home as pivotal to these pursuits after the abolition of slavery. In the late nineteenth century, as white southerners revoked citizenship rights and pushed black citizens out of government, the black home remained a central site of resistance. For middle-class and elite black Americans who advocated the uplift of their people, the uplift of the home was essential. Progress could be visually seen through the home, and uplifting that space would alleviate many of the greatest social evils of the time. In her

1898 address to the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Mary Church Terrell, who had just two years earlier co-founded the National Association of Colored Women, argued that by improving the home, black women could "strike at the root of evils, many of which lie, alas, at the fireside."[704] In addition to the ways black southerners declared their freedom and rights through the structure and objects of home, as explored in chapter 4, black activists throughout the US sought to visually and materially contrast the homes of black families in slavery to those in freedom. That meant distinguishing the assumed single dwelling structure of enslaved black Americans—the dilapidated one-room cabin—from the home of free black Americans.

To combat the white supremacist archive that supported their oppression, racial uplift activists created an alternative image archive of the black home that visually differentiated the black home in slavery from that in freedom. While in the hands of white supremacists, images of black homes proved the incapacity of black Americans, the visuality of black homes was also a potent tool used to find and foster social and political power. In an age of rapidly evolving technology that greatly increased the quantity of pictures available, the production, consumption, and manipulation of images were important tools. The image archive of black Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries overwhelmingly portrayed black women and men in stereotypical, negative ways. Yet increased calls for self-representation helped build an alternative archive.[705] Frederick Douglass understood the power of self-representation in racial

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[704] Mary Church Terrell, *The Progress of Colored Women* (Washington, D.C.: Smith Brothers, Printers, 1898). For more on the founding of the NACW, see Stephanie J. Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," *Journal of Women's History* 3, no. 2 (1991): 11–25.

[705] Shawn Michelle Smith has explored how these dueling archives contributed to the visualization of W. E. B. Du Bois's "double-consciousness." Shawn Michelle Smith, "'Looking at One's Self through the Eyes of

uplift, arguing for the growth of an African American artistic community that could counter white artists' "temptation to make the likeness of the negro, rather than of the man."[706] This visual activism demonstrated their progress from the era of slavery and their determination to maintain the rights won after its demise.[707]

Beyond the representation of faces and bodies, black activists believed that images of improved black homes could serve to underscore the humanity rather than color of the dwelling's inhabitants. By the turn of the twentieth century it was, as Reverend Morgan London Latta declared in his 1905 memoir, "a very common thing for our white friends to pass along the roads…[and] if they look towards the east or west, or in any direction, and see a log cabin, they will say nobody lives there but colored people."[708] Latta, who founded a university in Raleigh, North Carolina, to educate freedmen and orphans, furthermore proclaimed that distancing contemporary black Americans from the architectural form associated with slavery would serve individuals and the entire race. While most enslaved men and women had been born in one-room cabins, "it is time for us as a race to improve our condition, and forget the past and look forward to the future."[709]

Latta employed a technique common among memoirists meant to show his, and thus his race's, progress: he employed an image of a small ramshackle log cabin to

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Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 581–99.

[706] Frederick Douglass, "Negro Portraits," *Liberator,* April 20, 1849, 62.

[707] For more on nineteenth-century visual activism, see *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). The work on visual activism and anti-lynching campaigns is especially compelling. See, for example, Amanda K. Frisken, "'A Song Without Words': Anti-Lynching Imagery in the African American Press, 1889–1898," *Journal of African American History* 97, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 240–69.

[708] Morgan London Latta, *The History of My Life and Work* (Raleigh, 1903), 107–108.

[709] Ibid., 107.

represent his past and a photograph of a more refined dwelling with white paint, shutters, and significantly more square footage to demonstrate his present position. (Figures 6.17a&b) Memoirists Thomas Burton, Scott Bond, and Peter Bruner, all three born in slavery, also contrasted pictures of the tumbledown slave cabins of their childhood with photographs of the large, splendid homes acquired through their diligence, persistence, and talent. (Figures 6.18a&b, 6.19a&b, and 6.20a&b) The use of the log cabin as a representation of slavery, and thus of the position from which black individuals were to progress, is seen within the descriptions of memoirs. For example, in the black newspaper the *Afro-American*, one article title described the life of W. T. Vernon as that "Remarkable Rise of a Man Who Came Up from a Log Cabin In Missouri to High Place of Honor In the Service of the National Government."[710] By visualizing the stark differences between their homes in slavery and in freedom, black activists drew a stark line between the past and present, arguing that they (and by extension the whole race) had progressed so far beyond slavery that it was impossible to withhold the rights of citizenship and freedom from them.

Other literary genres also reiterated that slave cabins—represented through ramshackle small log cabins—were dwellings of the past. Paul Laurence Dunbar, born in 1872 to formerly enslaved parents from Kentucky, gained international fame as a poet and writer who invoked not only the "Negro dialect" but the imagery of times past as defined not by white America but by black.[711] Instead of black characters harkening back to a love for former masters, as was the case in Thomas Nelson Page's wildly popular

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[710] R. Thompson, "Career and Work of W. T. Vernon," *Afro-American,* February 19, 1910.
[711] For more on Dunbar's representation of the past against white representations, see William L. Van Deburg, *Slavery & Race in American Popular Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 100.

Lost Cause story "Marse Chan," Dunbar's formerly enslaved narrators reminisce of the people and spaces they loved.[712] In "The Deserted Plantation," included in Dunbar's 1896 collection *Poems of Cabin and Field*, the deserted spaces of the old plantation remind the narrators of "All dat loved me an' dat I loved in de pas'."[713] These included tumbledown cabins, represented in the publication by a set of contemporary photographs taken by the Hampton Institute Camera Club.[714] (Figure 6.21) Dunbar set verse about nostalgia against contemporary images, thereby correlating small, dilapidated cabins not with present black Americans but with the past.

Setting images of past and present black homes against one another was a valuable method for proving progress. The Tuskegee Conference, one of the most popular annual educational conferences for black Americans, adopted this technique by the turn of the century, producing stereographs that made three-dimensional the changes visible in black homes.[715] One reporter attending the conference wrote that a particularly "valuable feature of the meetings this year has been a series of stereopticon pictures from actual photographs secured by the school's Conference agent, showing the tumble-down cabins in which some of the colored farmers in this State were living not many years ago, and the comfortable homes and good stock which they own now, largely as a result of the advice and influence of the Conference."[716] These pictures almost certainly included ones

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[712] Lucinda H. MacKethan, "Thomas Nelson Page: The Plantation as Arcady," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 54, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 314–32.
[713] Paul Laurence Dunbar, "The Deserted Plantation," in *Poems of Cabin and Field* (Dodd, Mead & Company, 1896), 27.
[714] For more on the "photo-texts" of Dunbar and the Camera Club, which went far beyond *Poems of Field and Cabin*, see Ray Sapirstein, "Out from Behind the Mask: Paul Laurence Dunbar, the Hampton Institute Camera Club, and Photographic Performance of Identity," in *Pictures and Progress*, 167–203.
[715] Stereopticons were hand-held slide projectors that combined two images into one three-dimensional one, and were common in middle-class parlors throughout late-nineteenth-century America.
[716] Max Bennett Thrasher, "The Tuskegee Negro Conference," *Outlook* 67, no. 9 (March 2, 1901): 486.

like this late-nineteenth, early-twentieth-century photograph picturing the "Evolution of Farmer's Houses" in Tuskegee. (Figure 6.22) In the background is the past home: a crude log cabin. In the foreground is the present and future home: a small but well-made house with glass windows, central chimney, and porch.

Booker T. Washington, founder and principal of the Tuskegee Institute, recognized the potency of slave cabin imagery, and included an image of his birthplace (a ramshackle cabin) in his memoir. Washington even began a speech to the Home Missions Rally in 1896 by noting, "It was my privilege to start life at the point now occupied by most of my people—in a small, one-room log cabin on a slave plantation in Virginia."[717] (Figure 6.23) But that was the past. Washington's large, two-story, Queen Anne style red-brick home functioned as Tuskegee's social center, an example to all who passed through the Institute that progress from the one-room cabins of slavery was not only possible but very real. (Figure 6.24) Indeed, many believed that seeing progress in the domestic sphere was essential for racial uplift. By simply viewing "these homes of a better class as they go to and from the school grounds," a reporter for the *Outlook* noted, "[t]hey see what other men and women of their race have done—what they can do it they try."[718]

Beyond memoirs, poetry, and circulating stereographs, black activists sought larger stages on which to visually demonstrate racial uplift and progress. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, black activists used the opportunities of expositions and fairs like the 1895 Atlanta Exposition, where states exhibited photographs of elite black

[717] "Address of Booker T. Washington," *Evangelist* 67, no. 10 (March 5, 1896): 29.
[718] Thrasher, "The Tuskegee Negro Conference," 487.

homes against schools, churches, and other symbols of racial uplift.[719] (Figure 6.25) But no other stage was larger at the turn of the century than the Paris Universelle Exposition, where 50 million visitors walked through displays like the Negro Exhibit, which appeared in the American Section of the world's fair.[720] Thomas J. Calloway, referred to as the "Negro special agent," collected and installed the Negro Exhibit, with Daniel A. P. Murray of the Library of Congress and the noted W. E. B. Du Bois as collaborators. Du Bois declared that such an exhibition demonstrated what black American pursued for themselves, that there was "in the whole building no more encouraging" example of the progress of a people under their own guidance. This exhibit, Du Bois argued, revealed that black men and women were "studying, examining, and thinking of their own progress and prospects," and were ready to prove such progress to the international community.[721] Indeed, the *Bulletin of the Department of Labor* described the exhibit: "An unusual exhibit in the United States section was the varied collection showing the progress of the Negro race in the United States."[722] Evidence was necessary to demonstrate such uplift, so the exhibit contained "a series of striking models of the progress of the colored people," including 500 photographs and 32 charts, many of which can be seen in one of the few known photographs of the exhibit.[723] (Figure 6.26)

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[719] H. N. Payne, "The Negro Exhibit at the Atlanta Exposition," *The Church at Home and Abroad* 19 (January, 1896): 61.
[720] Linda Barrett Osborne, "Introduction," in *A Small Nation of People: W. E. B. Du Bois and African American Portraits of Progress* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2003), 13.
[721] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The American Negro at Paris," *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 22, no. 5 (November 1900): 577.
[722] "The Negro Exhibit," *Bulletin of the Department of Labor* 6 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901): 471.
[723] Du Bois, "The American Negro at Paris," 576.

His goal with the exhibition, Du Bois later recalled in his autobiography, was to "bring my work [on the 'Negro Problem'] to the notice of the thinking world."[724] Du Bois likely regarded the international community as a potential ally in the fight against Jim Crow, and sought to show that progress was very real and their assistance would not be for naught. Along with a broader regional study, Du Bois included specifics from his detailed case study of African Americans in Georgia. "The Georgia Negro: A Social Study" provided a more in-depth look at the economic and social progress of black Americans since emancipation through statistical charts and diagrams prepared by Du Bois and Atlanta University students. (Figure 6.27a,b,c,d,e,& f) Du Bois believed that the "modern way of showing progress" was through displaying a "series of very carefully thought-out charts, diagrams, models, etc."[725]

While these charts supported his argument, Du Bois also recognized the need to visualize progress in other ways to this polyglot, international community. Photographs were that medium. As Shawn Michelle Smith has argued, the Negro Exhibit photographs disrupted the image archive produced by white supremacists and displayed a different version of African America.[726] Along with visualizations of education and employment, Du Bois believed photographs of black homes would help create this new image archive.[727] Wielding that common visual juxtaposition used by memoirists, poets, and other black activists, Du Bois included "pictures of the old cabins" and of the homes of

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[724] W. E. B. Du Bois, "A soliloquy on viewing my life from the last decade of its first century, ca. 1958," 196, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers MS 312 (Du Bois Papers), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.
[725] Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to W. R. Banks, April 9, 1936, Du Bois Papers.
[726] Smith, "'Looking at One's Self through the Eyes of Others'," 581.
[727] Most scholarship on the Negro Exhibit photographs has focused on portraits, with very little analysis of the photographs of home. For instance, see essays by David Levering Lewis and Deborah Willis in *A Small Nation of People.*

America's most prominent black leaders.[728] Du Bois thus exhibited dozens of photographs from dilapidated cabins to city tenements to the grand Victorian mansions of the black elite across the South and beyond.[729] (Figures 6.28, 6.29, and 6.30)

Alongside graphs and charts showing the material advancement of black southerners, these visual representations of domestic progress demonstrated that black Americans had advanced far beyond the slave cabins of the past. Domestic uplift was obvious; Calloway reported that the exhibit "gave a clear insight into the advancement made with regard to domestic and educational life."[730] And that advancement would indicate the role of black Americans not only as home-makers, but as contributing citizens. The *New York Times* quoted Calloway in November 1899 as asserting that by "contrasting views of mud chimney cabins with well-appointed homes…the past and present condition of the race will be shown in a way to remove all doubt of the rapid progress being made," and thus "prove the negro's [*sic.*] value as a laborer, a producer, a citizen."[731] It is questionable what the impact of the exhibit had on black Americans at home. Miles E. Travis asserts that while the collection of photographs, charts, and models was a success from the perspective of Europeans, it had little impact on American race relations when it traveled to two American fairs.[732] While art historian Jeannene M.

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[728] Du Bois, "The American Negro at Paris," 576.
[729] Dr. Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. reconstructed the Negro Exhibit as a digital archive/exhibit, within which he notes the "several dozen photographs of black homes" that were included in the original exhibit. *The Exhibit of American Negroes: World's Fair, Paris, 1900*, http://www.fofweb.com/Onfiles/Afhc/afparis1900/exhibit__black_life__homes.htm.
[730] Thomas J. Calloway, "The Negro Exhibit," in *Report of the Commissioner-General for the United States to the International Universal Exposition, Paris, 1900,* vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 467.
[731] "Scope of the Negro Exhibit: Special Commissioner to Paris Outlines His Plans," *New York Times*, November 5, 1899.
[732] Miles E. Travis, "Mixed Messages: Thomas Calloway and the 'American Negro Exhibit' of 1900" (MA Thesis, Montana State University, 2004).

Przyblyski contends that the Exposition created a "zoo-like exposure" for the white gaze, that perspective does not encompass the motivations of the Negro Exhibit creators.[733] It is true that Du Bois and other racial uplift activists often employed the *visual* language of white middle-class culture, focusing on consumption, refinement, and bourgeois values. Yet they did so to create an alternative archive of what black America looked like, thereby challenging the cultural stereotypes that lie at the core of so many Jim Crow social ills.[734] Within the Exhibit, Du Bois and others re-appropriated their own image and represented themselves and their homes in positive ways, in opposition to the typical display of black bodies and homes in the white image archive. Indeed, in the same 1901 issue of the *Publications of the Southern Historical Association* wherein J. L. M. Curry attempted to re-write the history of "The South in the Olden Time," appears a short description of Du Bois's Negro Exhibit.[735] Its appearance in this Lost Cause-laden publication indicates the reach of the black visual archive. Even if it could not undo the historical revisionism of the Lost Cause, this alternative image archive and history shaped generations of black activists.[736]

Racial uplift advocates utilized not only the visuality of black homes; they also focused their efforts on the materiality of black homes—in particular, the physical

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[733] Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "American Visions at the Paris Exposition, 1900: Another Look at Frances Benjamin Johnson's Hampton Photographs," *Art Journal* 57, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 65. For a refutation of this perspective, see Wilfred D. Samuel, "Their Own Progress and Prospect: African Americans and l'Exposition Universelle de 1900," *Heath Anthology Newsletter* (Spring 1999).

[734] Shawn Michelle Smith complicates the image of Du Bois as a complete radical who refused racial uplift particularly through analyzing his use of images. In this way, she emphasizes that the use of white middle-class language is not something for current-day scholars to dismiss, but should be recognized in its own context. Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[735] "Reviews and Notices," *Publications of the Southern History Association* 5, no. 1 (January 1901): 83.

[736] The National Museum of African American History and Culture instituted a series on African American photography known as *Double Exposure* that explores the long history of this alternative black image archive.

embodiment of slavery in the one-room cabin. Even as black activists argued that this domestic form was the dwelling of their enslaved past, for decades after the end of slavery the majority of black southerners continued to live in one-room cabins similar to (or even the exact same as) those they lived in under slavery. Of course, the one-room cabin was not unique to African Americans. One-room dwellings are found in all cultures across time and place. From Native American tepees to the log cabins of western-moving frontiersmen, one-room homes are part of the American tradition. More specifically to black Americans, though, this tradition maintained a pernicious past. Black Americans understood the one-room cabin inhabited in freedom as directly linked to slavery, a kind of continuation of the cabins that so many enslaved families have been forced to live in.

W.E.B. Du Bois made this clear in his six-part series published in the *Southern Workman* entitled "The Problem of Housing the Negro," which explored the reasons, realities, and repercussions of bad black homes.[737] He charted the historical lineage of black homes, from the huts of African predecessors to the cabins of enslaved families to the contemporary housing issues in country, town, and city. Du Bois concluded (and showed through images) that the black home after emancipation looked very much like it did under slavery: "In the country districts of the South, where three-fourths of the American Negroes live, the old slave cabin is still the prototype of the present homes. Single rooms of logs or unceiled boards, with sometimes a small additional room, without glass windows, without stoves and with little furniture, form the homes of the

[737] Interestingly, it seems that Du Bois based "The Georgia Negro: A Social Study," which he included in the Negro Exhibit at the Paris Universelle Exposition, off the same information gathered for this series. Yet Du Bois adopted different tones for national versus international audiences, with the national focusing on the problem of stagnancy and the international focusing on progress.

majority of the Negroes."[738] (Figure 6.31) And this particular kind of home, Du Bois argued, created an environment that was uncomfortable, profligate, and unhygienic, one where the father and mother lacked the characteristics that supposedly defined the best of the gender: for men, the ability to protect their families and provide a secure home; for women, the ability to perform domestic duties and care for family. This was, according to Du Bois, "the home and the family which slavery bequeathed to freedom."[739] This inheritance was detrimental to the great possibilities that freedom promised to black Americans and affected all areas of life. The one-room cabin thus materially represented the enslaved past that had morphed into the pernicious Jim Crow present. Black activists thus sought to eradicate this contemporary iteration of a slave dwelling, and focused much of their work on the black home.

More than just a structure, middle-class and elite black Americans believed the home to be the most important arena for inculcating morality, eliminating criminality, promoting cleanliness, and demonstrating respectability. Indeed, as one black journalist put it, "Character is formed at the fireside."[740] Home was, from their perspective, where mothers taught the building blocks of life and where the problems affecting their race could be solved. Or at least, this was what the black home *should* do. Instead, leaders looked around the nation and saw black families overwhelmingly living not according to the principles and ideals they held dear. The homes of many black Americans were not up to standard, but the case was even worse where the stain of slavery continued to

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[738] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; I. The Elements of the Problem," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 7 (July 1901): 393.
[739] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; II. The Home of the Slave," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 9 (September 1901): 493.
[740] G. M. Elliott, "Crime and Criminality in the Negro Race," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 11 (November 1901): 639.

linger. In southern black homes, large families lived in one-room cabins. And that "one-room cabin," Alexander Crummell declared, "has been the source and origin of countless immoralities!"[741] Black male and female reformers understood this style of domestic architecture as a major culprit holding back the race. Of course, the lack of civil rights, increase in lynching, substandard schools, segregation, and a host of other public issues seriously harmed black Americans. But these were consequences of the root cause: bad homes.[742]

The participants at the 1890 Mohonk Negro Conference noted that the exchange of "the one-room cabin for a comfortable house of three or more rooms…is a primary condition for securing self-respect and the respect of others, and developing the moral character and safe citizenship."[743] Respect, morality, citizenship: rooted in the home, these qualities could only flourish in the *right* kind of home. And black activists declared these qualities, and thus the betterment of the black home, necessary for uplifting the race during this period of growing racism and diminishing rights. Indeed, one of the remedies to severe social problems suggested by the 1892 Tuskegee Conference was that leaders pay "more attention to material condition and home-life of the people."[744] They may have been "losing" in the public sphere of rights and citizenship, but black leaders believed

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[741] "Our Girls: Rev. Dr. Crummell Writes Ably Aid Wisely About the Care of Daughters," *Afro-American,* September 3, 1898.

[742] Not all black Americans agreed that racial uplift was the best method of attaining justice. As Paul Mullins has shown, the consumer citizenship espoused by many was not accepted by all. Some black activists argued that self-help and thrift would never, in fact, produce real change. See Paul R. Mullins, *Race and Affluence: An Archaeology of African America and Consumer Culture* (New York: Springer, 1999).

[743] "What the Mohonk Conference Asks for the Negro," *The Independent* 43, no. 2219 (June 11, 1891): 14. A report on the 1894 Tuskegee Conference also declared that, "So great a change in the matter of one room cabins was noted as dating from the conference that the original fraction used in the declaration that four-fifths of the people were still living in one room cabins was changed after the discussion to two-thirds as nearer the present state of affairs." Alive M. Bacon, "The Tuskegee Negro Conference," *Congregationalist* 79, no. 9 (March 1, 894): 317.

[744] R. C. Bedford, "The Negro Conference at Tuskegee, Ala.," *Lend a Hand* 8, no. 4 (April 1892): 255–56.

they could re-gain their position by focusing on the home. Thus the "abolishment of the one-roomed cabin and its attendant evils," as the Tuskegee Negro Conference proclaimed in 1896, became a central objective of reform-minded black men and women.[745] This crusade against the southern one-room cabin demonstrated how widespread Du Bois's argument in the *Southern Workman* that to solve the broader problems of Jim Crow, black Americans must create and maintain "good" homes. A speech at the 1902 Negro Young People's Education Congress declared that,

> The home is a citadel of strength the castle of virtue and patriotism. Without it both society and the state must crumble; with it the high ideals of life must thrive. While home must not be judged by the height of the walls or the decorations thereof, still I am here to maintain that no families can be prepared for the battles of life with from six or seven living in one room. There is progressive work to be done along this line. More rooms: betters home.[746]

More rooms, they argued, meant better homes; better homes, they believed, were the solution to the great "Negro problem" of the Jim Crow era.

It was thus imperative to eliminate the one-room cabin and replace it with a more spacious, tidy, aesthetically pleasing home.[747] No one cabin was the same, but black periodicals, conference proceedings, missionary and school reports, memoirs, and photographs provide a general idea of the living conditions of the majority of southern black Americans.[748] Typical descriptions of one-room cabins note cramped, unclean, and

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[745] B.M.H., "The Tuskegee Negro Conference: From a Special Correspondent DECLARATIONS," *Outlook* 53, no. 12 (March 21, 1896): 526.
[746] [No title], *Afro-American*, August 23, 1902.
[747] Barbara Burlison Mooney discusses the development of a specific African American "idealized domestic form," influenced by and unique from white conceptions of ideal dwelling aesthetics. Barbara Burlison Mooney, "The Comfortable Tasty Framed Cottage: An African American Architectural Iconography," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 61, no. 1 (March 2002): 48–67.
[748] Additionally, some (mostly northern white) activists emphasized the poor white families also lived in one-room cabins, which must be improved. Susan G. Chester noted that, "The one-room log cabin is by no means confined to our African brother; often I have found a large family of whites living in one room, cooking, sleeping, and eating in a cabin without a window." Chester, "Work Among the Poor Whites of the South," *Christian Union* 44, no. 4 (July 25, 1891): 197.

poorly ventilated or over exposed living quarters with inadequate furnishings and a serious lack of privacy. Frances Ellen Harper described the one-room cabins she encountered while traveling throughout the South in the 1870s as often "without a single window pane, where a whole family are living, parlor, chamber, and kitchen, all combined in one, and if you want light, you open the door, and the light and air both enter together that the cabins." She went on to note the imperatives of improving these spaces: "If dirt is next to sin we need the civilizer and the missionary, but soberly this mission ground is a good field for earnest, Christ-like labor."[749] This physical domestic space shaped its inhabitants; black activists argued that the structure of the one-room cabin more often than not created a bad environment for raising good children and good citizens. At the Home Missions Rally in 1896, Booker T. Washington connected the lack of privacy in one-room cabins to the poor state of religious and moral instruction: "What state of morality or practical Christianity you may expect when as many as six, eight, and even ten, cook, eat, sleep, get sick, and die in one room, I need not explain."[750] Likewise, Mary Church Terrell asserted in a 1901 op-ed in the *Southern Workman* that, "When families of eight or ten men, women and children are all huddled promiscuously together in a single apartment, a condition common among our poor all over the land, there is little hope of inculcating morality and modesty."[751]

It was Terrell and other black female activists that led the charge against the one-room cabin. In that same 1901 op-ed, Terrell proudly proclaimed that, "Should anyone ask me what special phase of the Negro's development made me most hopeful of his

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[749] Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "Communications," *Christian Recorder,* December 24, 1870.
[750] "Address of Booker T. Washington," 30.
[751] Mary Church Terrell, "Club Work of Colored Women," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 8 (August 1901): 436.

ultimate triumph over present obstacles, I should answer unhesitatingly, it is in the magnificent work the women are doing to regenerate and uplift the race."[752] These powerful words underscored black women's belief in their unique position to enact change. Terrell went on to list the important work of black women, including their efforts to establish kindergartens, help orphans and the elderly, and eliminate the convict lease system. And yet black women professed these public activities meaningless without the reform of one key arena: "it is only through the home that a people can become really good and truly great... Homes, more homes, better homes, purer homes, is the text upon which our sermons have been and will be preached."[753]

The National Association of Colored Women, co-founded by Terrell in 1896, proclaimed a "vigorous crusade" against the one-room cabin, inspired by the work of black and white women to uplift the home.[754] For middle-class and elite black women and men, then, destroying the one-room cabin was the method through which black women would liberate themselves from the false and pernicious stereotypes of their character, while simultaneously liberating the race from the legacy of slavery and the new reality of Jim Crow. Black women had long experienced a defamation of their character, as seen in the images (both visual and textual) they confronted on a daily basis in books, illustrations, advertisements, popular magazines, minstrel shows, and newspapers.[755] Speaking to the National Conference on Colored Women, Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin responded directly to vicious attacks made against black women's character, arguing that,

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[752] Ibid., 435.
[753] Ibid., 436–37.
[754] Ibid., 436.
[755] Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

"Too long have we been silent under unjust and unholy charges." Yet Ruffin believed that "we cannot expect to have them removed until we disprove them through ourselves." This was not simply an individual effort, for "army of organized women standing for purity and mental worth to break this silence, not by noisy protestations of what we are not, but by a dignified showing of what we are and hope to become that we are impelled to take this step."[756] In their own publications such as the *Woman's Era* and *National Association Notes*, black women countered the white supremacist visual archive and the belief of the "decadence of the negro woman" in part by arguing for the uplift of homes.[757] Women were supposedly the natural caretakers of the home and family; but even more than that, they were the vessels through which the entire race would be lifted. As Margaret Murray Washington put it, "in this kind of work is the salvation of the negro women, and all will agree with me that just in proportion as the women rise will the race rise. Work for these masses and you work for the race."[758]

Working-class black women were a key cog in this machine, for without them, all the talk about improving the black home would do nothing. As Anna Julia Cooper noted in 1892, "We must point to homes, average homes, homes of the rank and file of horny handed toiling men and women of the South (where the masses are) lighted and cheered by the good, the beautiful, and the true,—then and not till then will the whole plateau be lifted into the sunlight."[759] To improve the homes of all black families required that

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[756] "Address of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, President of Conference" in *Historical Records of Conventions of 1895-96 of the Colored Women of America; History of the Club Movement Among the Colored Women of the United States of America, as Contained in the Minutes of the Conventions, held in Boston, July 29, 1895, and of the National Federation of Afro-American Women, held in Washington D.C. July 20,21,22, 1896* (1902), 32, Library Company of Philadelphia.
[757] Tayleur, "The Negro Woman," 267.
[758] Margaret Murray Washington, "The New Negro Woman," *Lend a Hand* 15, no. 4 (October 1, 1895): 260.
[759] Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (Xenia, OH: The Aldine Printing House, 1892), 31.

domestic skills and knowledge be brought to the homes of working-class black women. Alexander Crummell in 1892 told a congregation at St. Luke's Church in Washington, D.C. church that, "large numbers of practical Christian women, women of intelligence and piety, women well trained in domestic economy, women who combine delicate sensibility and refinement with industrial acquaintance—scores of such women [should] go South and enter every southern State; to visit 'Uncle Tom's Cabin;' to sit down with 'Aunt Chloe' and her daughter; to gather them into 'mothers' meetings' and sewing schools."[760]

These Mothers' Meetings, a product of white women's work to improve the "intellectual, social, sanitary, moral and religious condition of their poor untaught and uncared-for sisters," spread throughout the South.[761] Meetings met in family cabins or makeshift model homes, wherein mothers would congregate to learn sewing, cooking, and proper cleaning techniques. In Tuskegee, Alabama, Margaret Murray Washington—wife of the influential black educator Booker T. Washington—formed a Mothers' Meeting in 1892 for the purpose of congregating women in nearby cabins to discuss and demonstrate best home-making practices.[762] Subjects included "cleanliness, cooking, sleeping, rearing children, the garden, the furniture and right living."[763] A *Southern Workman* article painted a textual picture of what these meetings looked like: "The living-room has been put in fresh order, the big bed in the corner neatly spread, its gay

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[760] "Sensible Views of the Negro Problem," *Zion's Herald* (September 21, 1892): 300.
[761] Ruth Lamb, "Mothers' Meetings," *The Sunday at Home,* no. 1177 (November 18, 1876): 746. Mothers' meetings were not only southern; an 1898 article in *Zion's Herald* makes clear that black women established meetings in New York. "The Negro in New York," *Zion's Herald* 76, no. 1 (January 5, 1898): 29.
[762] Emmett J. Scott, "Mrs. Booker T. Washington's Part in Her Husband's Work," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 24, no. 6 (May 1907): 42.
[763] J. H. Palmer, "Settlement Work at Tuskegee," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 12 (December 1901): 705.

quilt a trophy of past industry."[764] Home-making was thus not just about functional activities, but also the ornamental ones. The "art of home-making," as an article on Atlanta University argued, found "expression in the tasteful furniture, well selected pictures, and in the exquisite neatness of the snow-white beds."[765] (Figure 6.32) For middle-class and elite black women, this educational work was necessary. Improving the homes and home lives of poor black women would contribute to the uplift of black womanhood and the black race in its entirety.

In using the home in their larger struggle for freedom and equality, black women adopted and adapted white Victorian ideals for their own purposes.[766] The rhetoric and reality of the black home was not completely unique from other Americans' domestic sphere. Middle-class black women often read the same women's magazines as white ladies, and the language used to discuss the poverty and deprivation of the black working-class homes sounded at times very similar to the discourse surrounding immigrant tenements.[767] The Mohonk Negro Conference of 1890 made these connections explicit, noting that "We believe that the one-room cabin is a social curse of the Negro race, as is the reservation tepee of that of the Indian, and the over-crowded

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[764] Helen W. Ludlow, "Industrial Classes for Colored Women and Children," *Southern Workman* 31, no. 1 (January 1902): 28.
[765] Martha Goode Anderson, "Atlanta: The Center of Negro Education of the World," *Gunton's Magazine* (November 1903): 484–85.
[766] Ray Sapirstein discusses how Dunbar and the Camera Club participated in the creation of the alternative visual archive in part by relying on common white middle-class language of domesticity. Sapirstein, "Out from Behind the Mask," in *Pictures and Progress*, 167–203.
[767] Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). Saidiya Hartman discusses how middle-class and elite black women adopted the moral reform perspective that the public good justified the invasion of domestic spaces. Even as black Americans sought their right of privacy, they also believed in the necessity of invading working-class homes. This tension makes clear that the rights of home were perhaps not only racialized and gendered, but classed. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 158–61.

tenement-room that of our city slums."[768] The black home, however, had a history unlike any other domestic space in nineteenth-century America, associated as it was with slavery, dependence, and negative racial connotations. African American women recognized the power that the home held as an incubator for rights, as a symbol for culture, progress, and power.

Their quest to change a world built on the supremacy of white over black relied, in part, on upholding ideals drawn from the dominant culture like conspicuous consumption and Victorian morality. Margaret Murray Washington noted the necessity of teaching of bourgeois ideals of home to "[t]he New Negro Woman," noting that "Lessons in making home neat and attractive; lessons in making family life stronger, sweeter, and purer by personal efforts of the woman; lessons in tidiness of appearance among women; lessons of clean and pure habits of everyday life in the home…and many other kindred subjects, need to be given to this class of woman to-day."[769] For black women to be considered true women, they must, in the words of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, "stand forth and declare ourselves and principles, to teach an ignorant and suspicious world that our aims and interests are identical with those of all good aspiring women."[770] Prosperous black homes would serve as proof of black Americans' progress (both real and potential), and would be a counter to the one-room cabins of slavery and contemporary working-class black southerners. A 1902 *Southern Workman* article proclaimed that "no greater evidence of progress, thrift and prosperity can be found" in cities throughout the South than by that fact that, "the one-room cabin that once constituted the homes of the colored

[768] "A Negro Conference," *The Independent* 42, no. 2167 (June 12, 1890): 11.
[769] Washington, "The New Negro Woman," 258.
[770] "Address of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin," 32.

people have given way to neat, clean, well-painted cottages—comfortable, and in many instances attractive homes."[771]

The insistence on larger, cleaner, more fully furnished homes in some ways maintained the reigning norms of gender, race, capitalism, and consumerism. It appears that middle-class and elite black women upheld the systems that oppressed them.[772] Additionally, like the broader politics of respectability, the emphasis on home uplift downplayed the very real obstacles for poor rural black women. This activism tended to ignore the reality of class as a powerful method of distinguishing "us" from "others," even within the black community.[773] It also ignored the realities of life for working-class women (such as extreme poverty, lack of resources, and lack of time) that made adhering to middle-class standards nearly impossible. Reform-minded women asked their impoverished sisters to recognize "the importance of giving more time to their home life" when very few had more time to give.[774] In some ways, then, the goals of black activists during this period often served to reinforce stereotypes rather than counter them, and gave working-class black women impossible standards to live up to. But it is important to note the different goals of black activists: many of these women arguing for uplift in the home were not arguing for citizenship rights in ways that male activists, like Du Bois, were. They were, however, utilizing the home as a means of improving their lives and those of the broader race, something that Du Bois also sought. Indeed, the freedom struggle was not homogenous; the fight for freedom and rights in the nineteenth century

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[771] J. C. Napier, "Real Estate," *Southern Workman* 31, no. 1 (January 1902): 11.
[772] Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
[773] Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
[774] Alice M. Bacon, "The Tuskegee Negro Conference," *Congregationalist* 79, no. 9 (March 1, 1894): 317.

was heterogeneous and diverse. Black women's efforts to eliminate the one-room cabin and improve the black home did have a marked effect. Conference proceedings noted the interest of working-class black women and men in their homes, and the resultant decline in one-room cabins throughout the South.[775]

The potential for domestic uplift, and thus the capitalist and consumerist virtues of Victorian America, to be liberating appears in retrospect a bit naïve and perhaps deleterious to the quest for a more equal and just society. While it might be tempting to ask if a better tactic would have been to reject the normative principles of middle-class society, it is important to recognize that most black Americans did not see that as a real option. These women and men adopted the cultural language of the white middle-class in the hopes of altering the society that supported such ideals. As Margaret Murray Washington asserted in her article "The New Negro Woman," only through "this all-important work" of uplifting the home will "there be fewer thrusts at the immorality of the race; there will be less lynchings of negro men and women; then only will the white man who hates everything that is black…more readily accept the doctrine of one blood hath he made the nations of the earth."[776]

Contained in images and material examples of black homes were the hopes of what freedom could bring: safety, citizenship, and the rights of home too long denied to black Americans. In building a counter visual archive and demonstrating progress through the home, black activists sought to rectify the continued wrongs of Jim Crow America. Focusing their activism on the home was not a new strategy; enslaved and free

[775] See "A Negro Conference at Tuskegee, Alabama," *Evangelist* 63, no. 10 (March 10, 1892): 4.
[776] Washington, "The New Negro Woman," 260.

Americans had imbued their domestic spaces with political activism for nearly one hundred years. But by the end of the century, the connections between private and public issues—between what happened at home and what happened in the press, in the streets, in halls of government—were clear. The home was central to the nineteenth-century black freedom struggle.

EPILOGUE

Throughout the nineteenth century, black and white Americans looked to the home as a site to define their most cherished values. Liberty, citizenship, and family were connected to the home. Indeed, the struggle for freedom was the struggle for home; and the struggle for home, the struggle for freedom. The quest for home and liberty continued well into the twentieth century. As literary scholar Valerie Sweeney Prince has noted, "The search for justice, opportunity, and liberty that characterized the twentieth century for African Americans can be described as a quest for home."[777] And that quest continues today. Americans look towards the homes of their present and of their past to help them understand and improve their communities, their nation, and their world.[778]

If that is the case—if Americans define their values and character in part through home—then it is important to ask exactly what homes they use in their formulations. Familial homes are obvious choices, but so are historic homes. The combination of memory and history, the imagined past and its physical remains, influence how individuals interpret home. Those physical remains can be letters or diaries, newspapers or news footage, domestic objects or houses. More than anything else, these are the

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[777] Valerie Sweeney Prince, *Burnin' Down the House: Home in African American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), xii.

[778] This is obvious in diverse arenas. Black writers have invoked the idea, space, and structure of home, not to mention the endless metaphorical possibilities of home, in their work. Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison, for example, center stories on the quest to find home, to find a place of safety, comfort, and privacy. These same concerns led many to seek more equitable housing practices, particularly in urban areas known for redlining. Additionally, the continued intrusion and surveillance of minority-dominated urban communities (including the dwellings therein) has led others to push for national policing standards. On the flip side, "stand your ground laws," which follow in part from the castle doctrine of English common law, have increasingly come under scrutiny as veiled racist attacks. Considering the law's obvious links to both the second and fourth amendments, and thus to the idea and space of home and the security of it, the racialization of home appears to continue alongside the use of it as a space of activism and resistance.

sources that historians use to interpret the past, but they are also the sources through which all individuals make their memories. Scholars have made clear that these two things—history and memory—must be understood as separate processes with varying implications.[779] While history is a field of study undertaken by professionals, memory is subjective and undertaken by all. Every person forms their own memories, in concert with or in opposition to historical scholarship. People's memories are their own, making them especially potent. As David Blight has noted, "Memory is often owned; history is interpreted."[780] There is a disconnect between the scholar and her or his historical interpretation, but there can be little disconnect between a person's memories and her or his self.

The public's understanding of home and of American history is built not only on scholarship but on memory. Historians must bring their scholarship to the public consciousness. Indeed, these two processes overlap: people look to history to interpret, form, or re-imagine memories of individual and collective pasts. Yet it is not to scholarly monographs or articles, nor even to professors or high school history teachers, that people typically turn for history. In 1998 Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen found that far more Americans believe that "real" or "true" history is presented in museums and historic sites than in classrooms.[781] People connect to the past (both the intimate, personal past and the

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[779] David W. Blight's early career serves as a prime example of this historical interest in memory versus history. See Blight, "W. E. B. Du Bois and the Struggle for American Historical Memory," in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, eds. Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 45–71; Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory & the American Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

[780] David W Blight, "If You Don't Tell It Like It Was, It Can Never Be As It Ought To Be," in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, eds. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, new ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 25.

[781] Just over one-third of those surveyed trusted high school teachers to tell the truth about history, compared to around half of those surveyed who trust college professors. Almost 80% of those who

broader collective pasts) through material, visual, textual, and media displays of historical scholarship in historic sites and museums. They are (re)building their memories, in part, based on what they encounter as "real" history in these spaces. If historians want to be a part of making history "real" for people, making memory less dependent on uninformed, prejudiced, and un-contextualized beliefs, then we must pay close and special attention to our public presentations of the past. We must work collaboratively with communities, curators, docents, park rangers, administrators, and other public history professionals. Academic scholarship has the potential to help historic sites present a more accurate and ethical portrait of American history and American homes, and thereby guide individuals as they contemplate history and grapple with the implications of that history in their own lives.

It is likely that most Americans encounter historic homes as tourists. They directly engage with the home, the space, the objects, and the stories of those who lived there in hopes of revealing something about the inhabitants and the culture, politics, and wider history of the era. Yet most historic homes come from a small, elite, and white segment of the American population and too often present a whitewashed version of the past that justifies enduring oppression.

This is particularly obvious throughout the US South, where billboards and road signs promote romantic plantation tours. Sites of enslavement serve as playgrounds for an overwhelmingly white tourist population seeking not historical accuracy but escapism. As Jessica Adams asserts, "Plantations have become popular tourist destinations among

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responded to the Rosenzweig and Thelen survey had faith in museums. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 21.

whites because 'historic house' or 'unique architecture' or 'romantic' comes to mind before the image of slavery does. And when it does, it will have been filtered through architecture and romance and perhaps not seem so disturbing anymore."[782] Visitors want to remember a better time, a world lost to time, when things moved slower, people were kinder, life was easier, and life appeared (from certain perspectives) more harmonious. This is, of course, fiction. But it is easy to draw such an interpretation of history from these sites, due in large part to the myopic focus, both visually and interpretively, on the "Big House," its furniture, and its elite inhabitants. It is common to tour a southern plantation site and never hear about slavery. You might see the remnants of cotton or sugar canes in the surrounding fields. You might hear about the "servants" beloved by the family. You might walk into the kitchen, cooled now by air conditioning. But often you will walk into a space of enslaved labor and living, and never know that individuals in bondage called that place home. The problem extends beyond the omission of slave cabins in tours; the "Big House" was as much a space of slavery as every other square inch of the plantation.

It is difficult to interpret slavery in these spaces (or any space for that matter).[783] Balancing oppression and resistance, diversity and commonalities, changes and continuities, and doing so in a way that is both historically accurate and entertaining enough to attract visitors, is no small feat.[784] Opposition to accurate interpretation often

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[782] Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 55.

[783] The Tracing Center on Histories and Legacies of Slavery is an organization dedicated to improving the presentation of and conversation around slavery in a diverse range of mediums, from documentaries to museums. They have compiled a basic but useful set of strategies, which they will continue to improve and expand upon in a Rowman & Littlefield book series. See especially *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites*, eds. Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

[784] Ira Berlin captured the difficulty in presenting and understanding slavery: "What make slavery so difficult for Americans, both black and white, to come to terms with is that slavery encompasses two

comes from overtly racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, but also from African Americans who may feel uncomfortable or anxious or angry when confronted with this history. John Michael Vlach, noted art historian of African American architecture and material culture, did not expect the fiercest backlash against his Library of Congress exhibition "Back of the Big House: The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation" to come from black employees and community members. In fact, they demanded the closure of the exhibit before it even opened to the public, arguing that the exhibition was "offensive."[785] Similarly, when Colonial Williamsburg staged a recreation of a slave auction, black activists from organizations like the Richmond Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference decried the performance as "glorifying the horrors and humiliation of the evil or slavery." The case at Colonial Williamsburg reveals both the potential for opposition and the importance of moving forward with the help of community partners. Some who initially expressed reservations about the event afterwards commented on its power. Jack Gravely, political director of the Virginia branch of the NAACP, noted that the staging revealed that, "Pain had a face, indignity had a body, suffering had tears."[786] In other words, such a corporeal experience revealed the humanity, the reality, the lived experience of slavery. Even with such difficulties, the complex history of slavery and race in this country must be presented to the public in

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conflicting ideas—both with equal validity and with equal truth, but with radically different implications. One says that slavery is one of the great crimes in human history; the other says that men and women dealt with the crime and survived it and even grew strong because of it. One says slavery is our great nightmare; the other says slavery left a valuable legacy. One says death, the other life." Berlin, "Coming to Terms with Slavery in Twenty-First Century America," in *Slavery and Public History*, 7.

[785] John Michael Vlach, "The Last Great Taboo Subject: Exhibiting Slavery at the Library of Congress," in Ibid., 61.

[786] James Oliver Horton, "Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue," in Ibid., 50, 51.

spaces where they willingly travel to engage with and learn from the past. If, as noted above, Americans trust museums and historic sites more than professors, then historians need to work with public history sites to ensure that accurate, nuanced, and ethical scholarship reaches the public in those venues.

One venue type central to so many powerful American myths is the grand southern plantation. Tours focus almost exclusively on the architecture and furniture of the "Big House," rarely noting the essential role of enslaved labor to both. It was, very often, enslaved hands who crafted and cleaned that furniture and built those houses. Plantation tours often overlook this facet of history. A 2002 study by Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small revealed that, in an analysis of 122 historic plantation sites in Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana, the vast majority ignored, marginalized, or trivialized the role, experiences, and spaces of enslaved individuals.[787] These and other studies argue that such minimization occurs through discursive strategies, such as referring to enslaved laborers as "servants," yet it is also important to recognize the spatial and material ways that these sites lessen the presence of slavery.[788] Much like slave owners themselves often did in the past, historic plantation site administrators utilize visual and material methods to separate and demean the spaces and lives of the enslaved.

Many sites have extant historical dwellings, but do a poor job of interpreting or fail to interpret at all. Tours often pass slave dwellings with little to no comment. If the

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[787] Eichstedt and Small reported that there were "thirty-one times as many mentions of furniture at these sites than of slavery or those enslaved." Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 109.

[788] See also *Slavery and Public History*; Barbara Burlison Mooney, "Looking for History's Huts," *Winterthur Portfolio* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 43–70.

space has been interpreted, it is often to project a belief that the enslaved were well-cared for. Often, these dwellings are converted into administrative or visitor-use buildings. Some use slave dwellings as bridal suites for those who rent the plantation for weddings. Even the most cursory search of plantation sites in the US South reveals that it is exceedingly common for these sites to rent their spaces for weddings and other events. This brings up a quandary: if the preservation of enslaved homes relies almost exclusively on rentals, how can these sites recognize the role of slavery without threatening their very existence? This practical consideration—that public history is a *business* that must be run as such—is understandable, yet it is also an easy crutch to argue for a stagnant interpretation. Monticello's use of slave spaces as restrooms, for example, was an overt snub to the history of the enslaved. Just recently, archaeological work near Thomas Jefferson's bedroom at Monticello has revealed that the space which had been used as a restroom for visitors since the 1940s was likely the living and sleeping quarter of Sally Hemings.[789] This revelation reiterates the need to take seriously the spaces outside the traditional purview of the "Big House" tour, not simply converting them into functional spaces but investigating and utilizing them for their historical purposes.

A great number of slave dwellings are lost to time, yet reconstruction is a viable option for those with resources. In May 2015, Monticello revealed the first phase of their Mountaintop Project, a multi-year undertaking to restore the plantation and tell the stories

[789] See Krissah Thompson, "For decades they hid Jefferson's relationship with her. Now Monticello is making room for Sally Hemings," *Washington Post* (February 19, 2017). Accessed March 9, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/for-decades-they-hid-jeffersons-mistress-now-monticello-is-making-room-for-sally-hemings/2017/02/18/d410d660-f222-11e6-8d72-263470bf0401_story.html?utm_term=.378a2f79b4c5.

of those who lived there, both the free and the enslaved. This included the restoration of Mulberry Row, what Monticello calls the "industrial hub" of the plantation, where dozens of free and enslaved women, men, and children worked and lived. A "negro quarter" and later "servants houses," as Jefferson labeled them, housed enslaved laborers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[790] Monticello reconstructed one log cabin to show how an enslaved family—that of John and Priscilla Hemmings—lived in this small space.[791] (Figure E.1) Aspects of the dwelling are representative of a wide range of enslaved living conditions: the space is small (20.5' by 12') but held as many as eight people at one time; it is sparsely furnished, and includes a large hearth, sub-pit floor, and sleeping loft. Of course, the rarity must also be reiterated for visitors: many enslaved people did not live in a house with their family members.[792] The reconstructed dwelling does provide some sense of the lives of the enslaved. As does a mobile app called "Slavery at Monticello," which utilizes digital technologies to better immerse visitors into the lives and labor of the enslaved at Monticello. Wealthy institutions like Monticello are

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[790] Monticello's website is one of the best for historic homes, in part because it not only provides a broad overview of the site's history and necessary tourist information, but it explores and presents findings from the many ongoing research projects on the site. This includes an interesting digital exhibition "Landscape of Slavery: Mulberry Row at Monticello," which examines the three phases of building with Jefferson's specifications. See http://slavery.monticello.org/mulberry-row.

[791] I had the privilege of exploring Mulberry Row with the project manager, Jobie Hill, and was simultaneously impressed and disappointed. The dwelling has been faithfully restored to Jefferson's specifications and much of the interior is in concert with descriptions of other slave spaces, yet it has almost no life or feeling in it.

[792] Amanda G. Seymour has argued in the context of Ash Lawn-Highland, home of President James Monroe, that visitors looking into one reconstructed slave dwelling walked away with a sense of relief after seeing the interior of the space. The stone structure had wood floors and large fireplaces, "amenities" that made slavery not seem so bad. Interestingly, architects rebuilding the dwelling in 1985 used a 1908 photograph and sought little archaeological evidence to support it. By 1908 this was no slave dwelling but a free dwelling. Better research must be undertaken when presenting the "facts" of history through material elements like architecture. Seymour, "Pride and Prejudice: Interpreting Slavery at the Homes of Five Founding Fathers," in *Interpreting African American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites*, ed. Max A. van Balgooy (New York: Roman & Littlefield, 2014), 10.

utilizing various visual, material, and, in this case, digital means of reconstructing slavery at sites where it had previously been ignored, marginalized, or trivialized.[793]

Most historic plantation sites do not have the money, staff, or time to reconstruct buildings and fund archaeological digs, let alone revamp their interpretations of slavery and, more specifically, slave dwellings. Yet we cannot allow the racialized ideology of slave owners to continue to reign over these spaces. Downplaying or disregarding these spaces continues the slave owners' belief that the rights of home, freedom, and citizenship could and should be denied to black women and men. It engrains the racist underpinnings of a culture that values elite white homes and devalues working-class black ones. Only by incorporating and highlighting the lives and spaces of enslaved individuals can plantation sites tell a true, ethical history. Slave dwellings can provide a crucial means of discussing slavery, particularly the complex web of oppression and resistance that existed in the idea, space, and structure of these buildings.

Too few plantation sites extend the discussion from slavery to freedom, as many tours end with the defeat of the Confederacy. Few recognize how the homes of formerly enslaved individuals were centers of activism and central to defining freedom. Many continued to live in dwellings built in slavery, dwellings that took on new meanings and produced new experiences. New forms of surveillance and intrusion by white supremacists arose, just as a new conspicuous consumerism emerged as a proof of citizenship for black Americans. Yet, as such a distinction makes clear, black homes maintained dual natures as sites of resistance and site of oppression. Many plantation

[793] Other sites include Montpelier in Virginia (James Madison's home) and Whitney Plantation in Louisiana. Previously closed to the public, John Cummings' family purchased the Whitney Plantation and completely overhauled it. Whitney is the only historic plantation site dedicated solely to telling the stories of enslaved men, women, and children.

sites fail to interpret their material and documentary evidence of tenancy or home ownership by free black Americans. One rare exception is Montpelier, the home of James Madison, which within its boundaries includes a well-preserved cabin and farm of a man formerly enslaved by Madison, George Gilmore.[794] While the site is separate from the main house tour, the presence of this dwelling extends the story about slavery, freedom, and race beyond the antebellum era and beyond the traditional narrative of one of America's founding fathers. Indeed, the continuities and changes as black homes moved from slavery to freedom provide visitors with new ways of understanding American history.

But this narrative does not, should not, simply stop at the end of the nineteenth century. Public historians should seek to present the messy, difficult history to promote a more attentive and thoughtful citizenry. Public historians believe firmly in the use of history to change and improve our world today. Demanding that plantation sites do not erase or downplay enslaved lives and spaces is part of the larger process of ensuring that Americans are presented with history, not with an idealized memory. Bad history provides a base for unjust policies and systems. Making sure that the public encounters not only beautiful mahogany furniture and grandiose homes but also cramped and sweltering slave dwellings is one method of countering the continued evasion of the true horrors of the American past. As Jelani Cobb, writer and professor of journalism, wrote in the *New Yorker*, the attempts to elide the "ugliness of the slave past in this country…is neither novel nor particularly surprising." He goes on to say,

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[794] Orange County, Virginia, where Montpelier and the Gilmore Cabin sit, is the location where Roseanna and Squire May filled their farmhouse with domestic objects soon after their marriage in 1873, discussed at length in chapter four. There is much more work to be done to connect the Squire family with the broader Orange County African American community, including the Gilmores.

> The unwillingness to confront this narrative is tied not simply to the miasma of race but to something more subtle and, in the current atmosphere, more potentially treacherous: the reluctance to countenance anything that runs contrary to the habitual optimism and self-anointed sense of the exceptionalism of American life. It is this state-sanctioned sunniness from which the view of the present as a middle ground between an admirable past and a halcyon future springs. But the only way to sustain that sort of optimism is by not looking too closely at the past. And thus the past can serve only as an imperfect guide to the troubles of the present.[795]

Using history to support contemporary injustices becomes much easier when that history is incomplete, inaccurate, or misguided. One main problem with presenting escapism as history is that, as Jessica Adams perceptively argues, "the roots of contemporary social problems are all the more easily blamed on some perceived intrinsic flaw in black culture," rather than part of a longer racist history.[796] Scholars know that narratives of history told during historic home tours are idealistic, simplistic, and even blatantly inaccurate. This is not so obvious to those outside the academy. The goal of public historians is to bridge this chasm, to bring the best scholarship to the public in ways that are engaging, enlightening, and ethical. This dissertation could serve to improve the interpretation and presentation of history on plantations tours throughout the US South, where the overwhelmingly focus continues to be on white people, stories, objects, and homes. Incorporating, emphasizing, and centralizing the dwellings of enslaved and free black Americans on these sites would better ensure these sites reflect the complexity of American slavery and freedom.

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[795] Jelani Cobb, "Ben Carson, Donald Trump, and the Misuse of American History," *The New Yorker* (March 8, 2017). Accessed March 9, 2017, http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/ben-carson-donald-trump-and-the-misuse-of-american-history?intcid=mod-latest.

[796] Adams, *Wounds of Returning*, 59.

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Greenfield Village-Buildings-Hermitage Slave Quarters-Original Site Folder, Box 47, E.I. 1929

Virginia Historical Society

Adam Foster Letters

Allen Family Papers, Section 1

Bailey Family Papers, Section 15

Bassett Family Papers, Section 21

Blanton Family Papers: Jennie F. Stephenson, "My Father and His Household, Before, During, and after the War," April 22, 1897, Woodstock Virginia

Bruce Family Papers, Section 12

Carter Family Papers, Carter Braxton Account with Thomas Corbin Braxton

Dangerfield Hunter Will

Edward Ingle Papers, correspondence with Edward Atkinson

Episcopal Church Diocese of Virginia Papers, Section 5

Eppes Family Papers, Sections 39 through 41

Garnett Family Papers, Section 8

Grinnan Family Papers, Section 15, 28

Harvie Family Papers, Section 1, 11

Holladay Family Papers, Section 57

Holland Family Papers, #7

Hundley family Papers, Section 4

James Jones Collection, Box 1

James T. Atkins Papers, Section 1, 2

Lewis Miller Drawing Book

Life Insurance Company of Virginia Papers, Series 1

Marie Rice Reminiscences

Mary Custis Lee Papers, Section 26

Mason Family Papers, Section 2

Mrs. Charity Dabney Papers

Myers Family Papers, Section 14

Myrta Lockett Papers, Autobiography of Harwood Alexander Lockett

Philip St. George Cocke Papers, Sections 1 through 6

Rutherfoord Family Papers, b14

Sarah S. Carter Diary

Teapot, silver, c. 19th century

Thomas F. Darby Letters

William Kennedy Papers, section 3

William Selwyn Ball, *Reminiscences of an Old Rebel* (c. 1920s)

Winterthur Library, Museum, and Garden
Photographs of Thomas Day furniture, Decorative Arts Photograph Collection, Visual Resources Department

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Christian Recorder
Colored American
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APPENDIX A: FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Residence of Dr. S. P. Hargrave, in Sara Agnes Rice Pryor, *My Day: Reminiscences of a Long Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909), 42–43.

Figure 1.2. South Isle Plantation (a.k.a. The Oaks), http://www.oldhalifax.com/county/SouthIsle.htm.

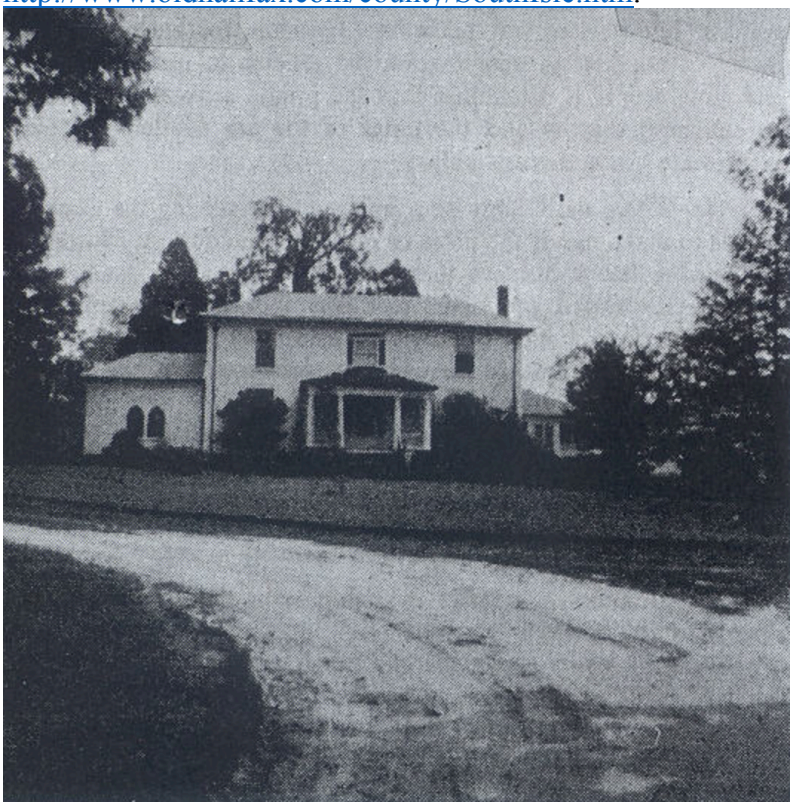


Figure 1.3. The Hermitage, Slave Cabin, 1804, Nashville, Tennessee, USA, Getty Images.

Figure 1.4. Hermitage Slave Quarters, Chatham County, Georgia. Photograph by Charles E. Peterson, 1934, found at https://www2.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/panel15.html.

Figure 1.5. A. Thompson, "Slave lock," 19th century, metal, cast iron, and brass, Collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

Figure 3.1. This table came from the Cedar Grove Plantation in Edgefield, South Carolina. Table, mid 19th century, wood, 28 x 66 x 48" (71.1 x 167.6 x 121.9cm), Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 3.2. I was lucky to be part of the research team that discovered these chairs at Richmond. Chair, 1800–1850, ash and rawhide, 35 x 18.5 x 15.25" (88.9 x 47 x 38.7cm), Private Collection. Photograph by The Classical Institute of the South, Inc.

Figure 3.3. Ann, a young enslaved woman, made this quilt on plantation of William Womack in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. Quilt, 1840–1860, cotton, 100 x 85” (253 x 216cm), Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

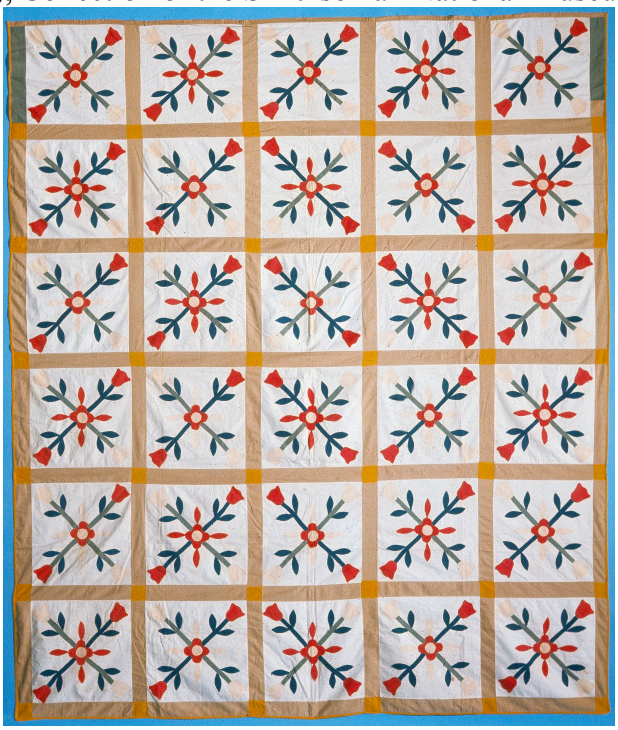


Figure 3.4. Cradle made by an enslaved person, 1795–1830, wood and metal, 15 3/8 x 29 x 23” (39.1 x 99.1 x 58.4cm), Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 3.5. Archaeologists hypothesize that the log wing of the John Riley house was the location Henson described in his autobiography. John Milner Associates, Inc., "Historic Structure Report for the Riley House/Josiah Henson Site," prepared for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Montgomery County Department of Parks (June 2008), http://www.montgomeryparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/henson_historic_structures_report-web.pdf.

Figure 4.1. Thomas Nast, *Emancipation*, 1865, print on wove paper, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

Figure 4.2. R. W. Harrison, [Six Generations], c. 1893, photographic print, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

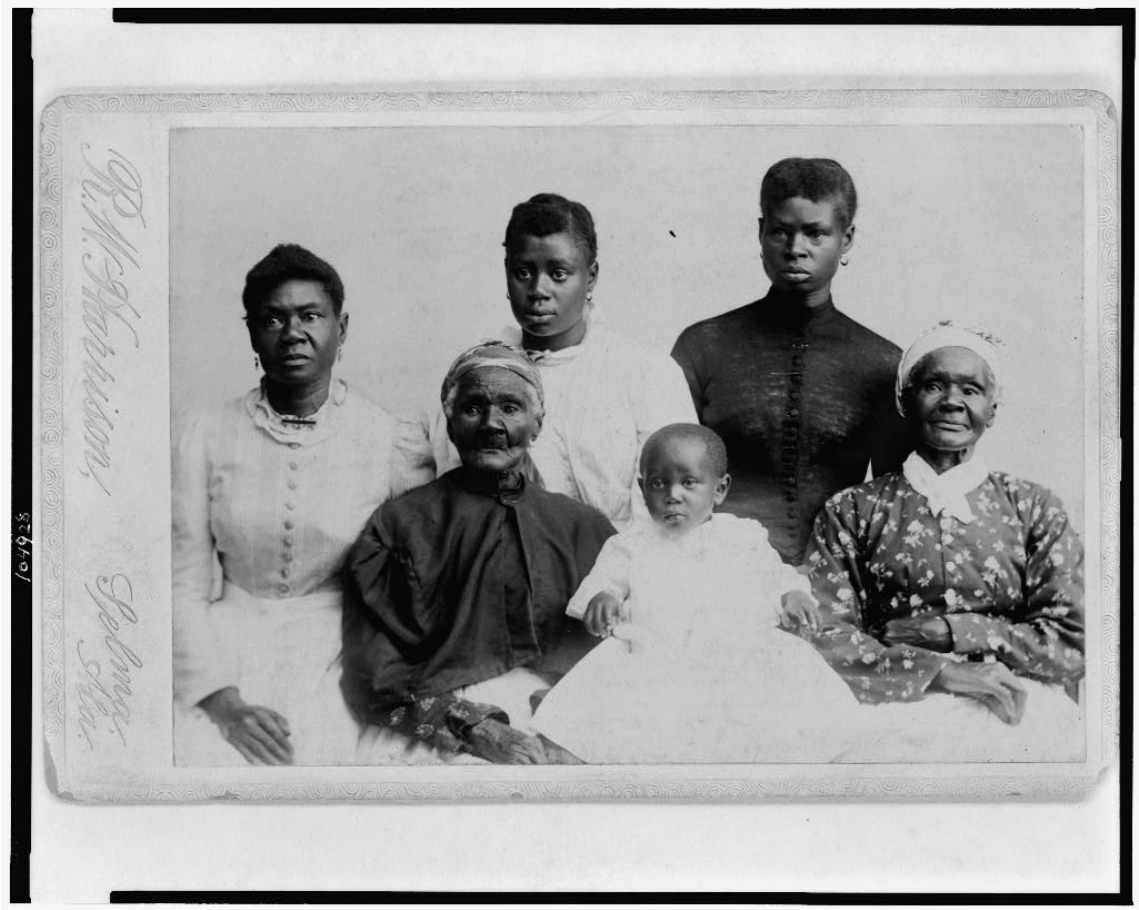


Figure 4.3. Nothing within this photograph identifies or even suggests whether the picture was taken in slavery or freedom. A. W. Möller, “Views of Thomasville and Vicinity: No. 52,” ca. 1895, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.4. Slave cabin from Point of Pines Plantation in Charleston County, South Carolina, ca. 1800–1850, photograph from South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

Figure 4.5. J. N. Wilson, “Aunt Rachel’s Cabin,” African Americans—box 283, Stereograph collection, American Antiquarian Society.

4.5a. Full view

4.5b. Zoom view

Figure 4.6. This photograph shows the irregular spacing that went against government imposed ideas of spatial arrangement. Samuel Cooley, *Refugee Quarters at Mitchelville,* 1865, National Archives and Records Administration, found at http://www.bcgov.net/mitchelville/photos/.

Figure 4.7. Though house exteriors can be deceptive, many of the cabins (like the two pictured here) were likely one room, perhaps with fabric dividers. Samuel Cooley, *Refugee Quarters at Mitchelville,* 1865, National Archives and Records Administration, found at http://www.bcgov.net/mitchelville/photos/.

Figure 4.8. Small, one-room, whitewashed cabins line a street at Drayton Hall, similar in form and style to those photographed by Samuel Cooley (Figure 8). Henry P. Moore, “Drayton's negro quarters, Hilton Head, S.C.,” 1862, Gladstone Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

Figure 4.9. The tent addition greatly enlarged this tiny one-room cabin. Samuel Cooley, *Refugee Quarters at Mitchelville,* 1865, National Archives and Records Administration, found at http://www.bcgov.net/mitchelville/photos/.

Figure 4.10. The iron stove pipes can be seen protruding from the roofs of these Mitchelville homes. Samuel Cooley, *Refugee Quarters at Mitchelville,* 1865, National Archives and Records Administration, found at http://www.bcgov.net/mitchelville/photos/.

Figure 4.11. Southeast elevation of the Harrod house, Ben's Creek, in McDaniel, *Hearth and Home*, 215.

Figure 4.12. The original façade was covered by an enclosure at some point in the twentieth century. Jones Hall Sims house, in McDaniel, *Black Historical Resources*, 112.

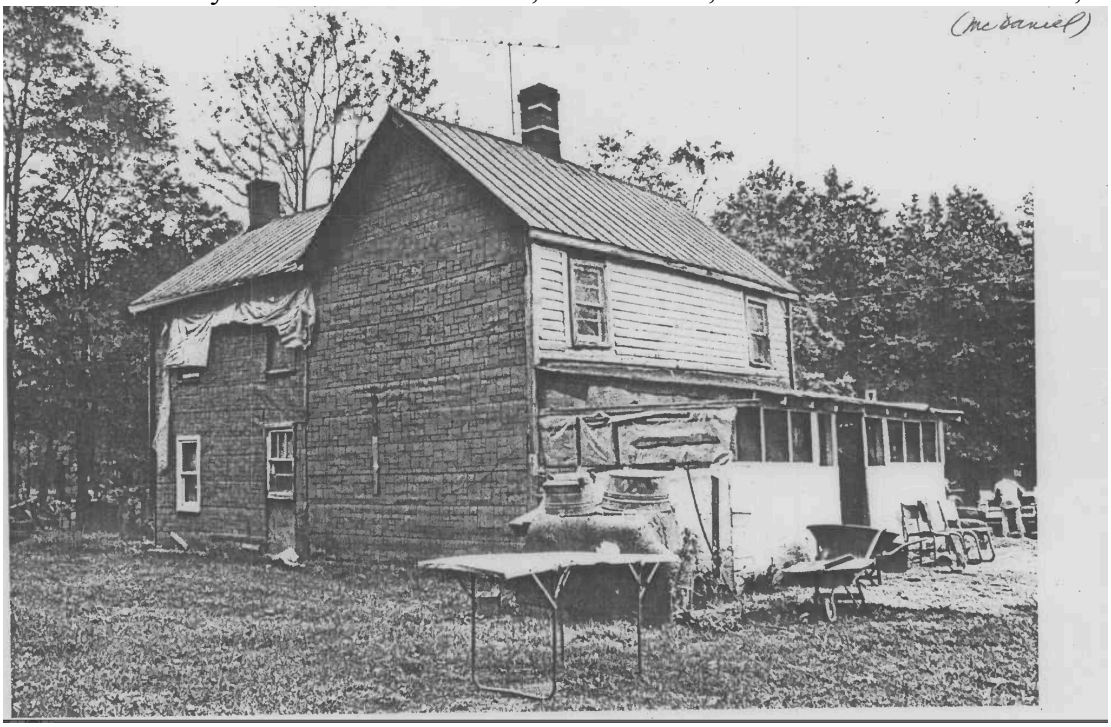


Figure 4.13. Little to no additions or siding was added to the Bailey house, making its current form in this photograph nearly identical to what Bailey would have envisioned in 1899. Basil Bailey House, photographed 1985, Maryland Historical Trust, Inventory Form for State Historic Sites Survey—Jonesville Historic District.

Figure 4.14. H. P. Cook, “Possum am Sweet,” 1898, Special Collections and Archives, Valentine Richmond History Center.

Figures 4.15 a&b. Ceramic pitcher and washbowl, ca. 1875–1920, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.16. Hinged wooden box, ca. 1875–1920, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.17. Marble-top table, ca. 1875, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.18. Walnut armchair, ca. 1870–1875, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.19. Oil lamp found in Jones-Halls-Sims house, unknown date, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.20. Fork and knife from Tubman household, 1870s, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.21. Silver teapot, late 18th/early 19th century, Virginia Historical Society.

Figure 4.22. Chair, ca. 1800–1850, private collection, photographed by Classical Institute of the South.

Figure 4.23. Ambrotype, ca. 1865, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

Figure 4.24. J. Hoover, *Heroes of the Colored Race* (Philadelphia, 1881), Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Figure 4.25. Kurz & Allison, *Storming Fort Wagner* (Chicago: Kurz & Allison-Art Publishers, c1890), Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Figure 4.26. James M. Vickroy, *Afro-American Historical Family Record*, 1899, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 4.27. Family Bible used by the family of Charles and Henrietta Shearer, 1875, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

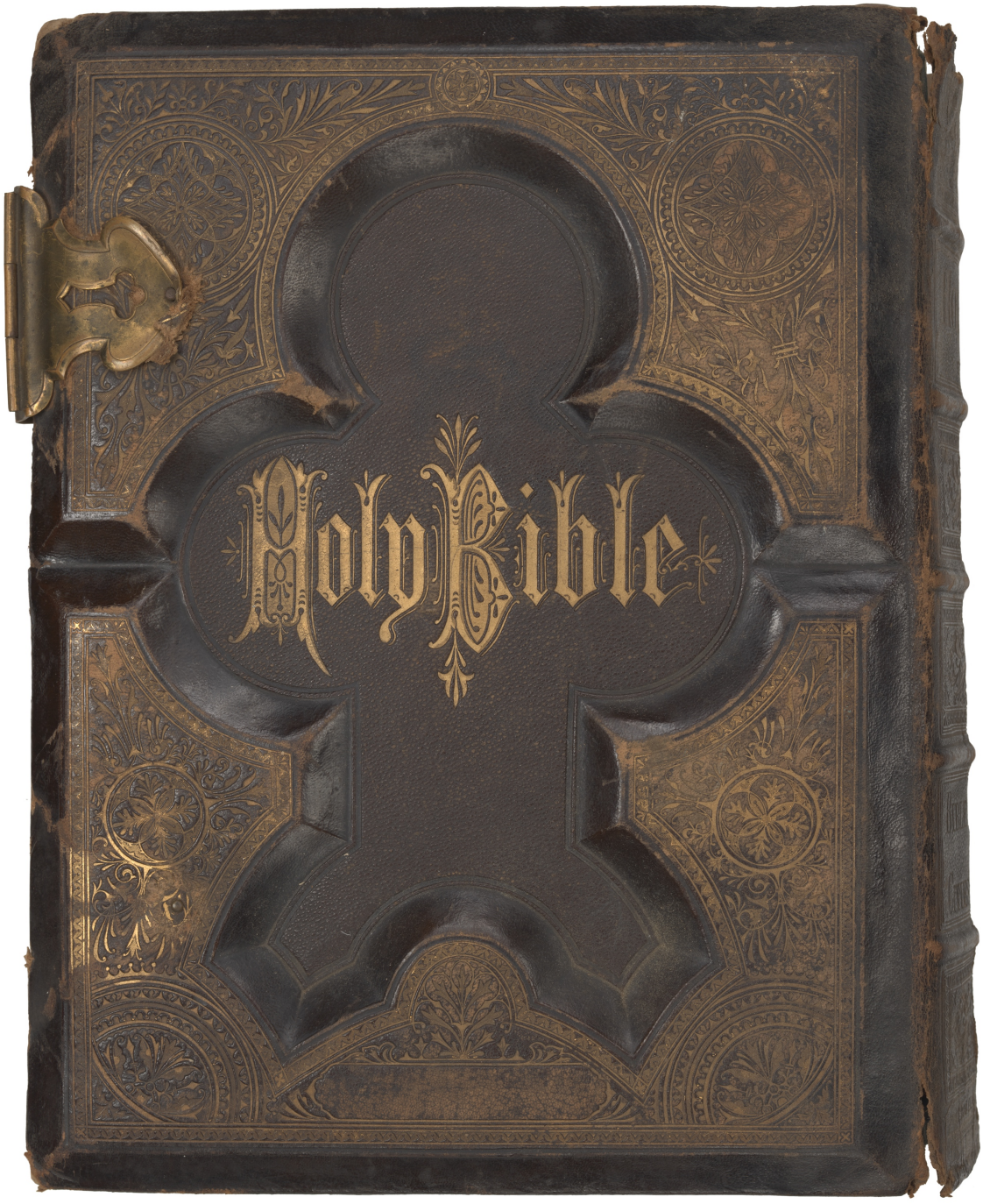


Figure 4.28. The back door opening can be clearly seen through the front door opening. Slave cabin from Point of Pines Plantation in Charleston County, South Carolina, ca. 1800–1850, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Figure 4.29. Iron lock and set of keys owned by members of the Ellis family, late 19th/early 20th century, Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

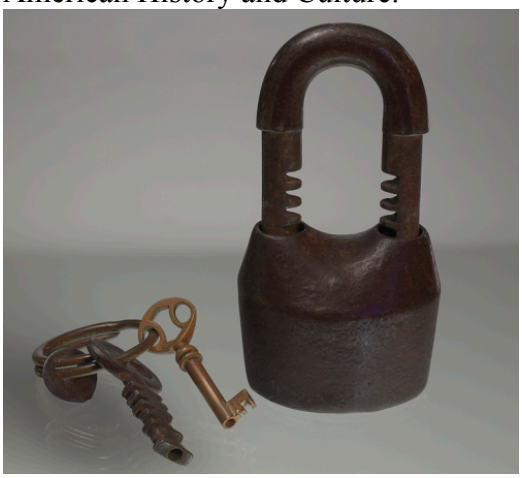


Figure 4.30. Figure 5.2 in Scott Butler, "Archaeological Data Recovery at Mitchelville (38BU2301) Hilton Head Island Airport Improvements Study Area" (December 2013), 147.

Figure 4.31. W. E. B. Du Bois, "[The Georgia Negro] Valuation of town and city property owned by Georgia Negroes," ca. 1900, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

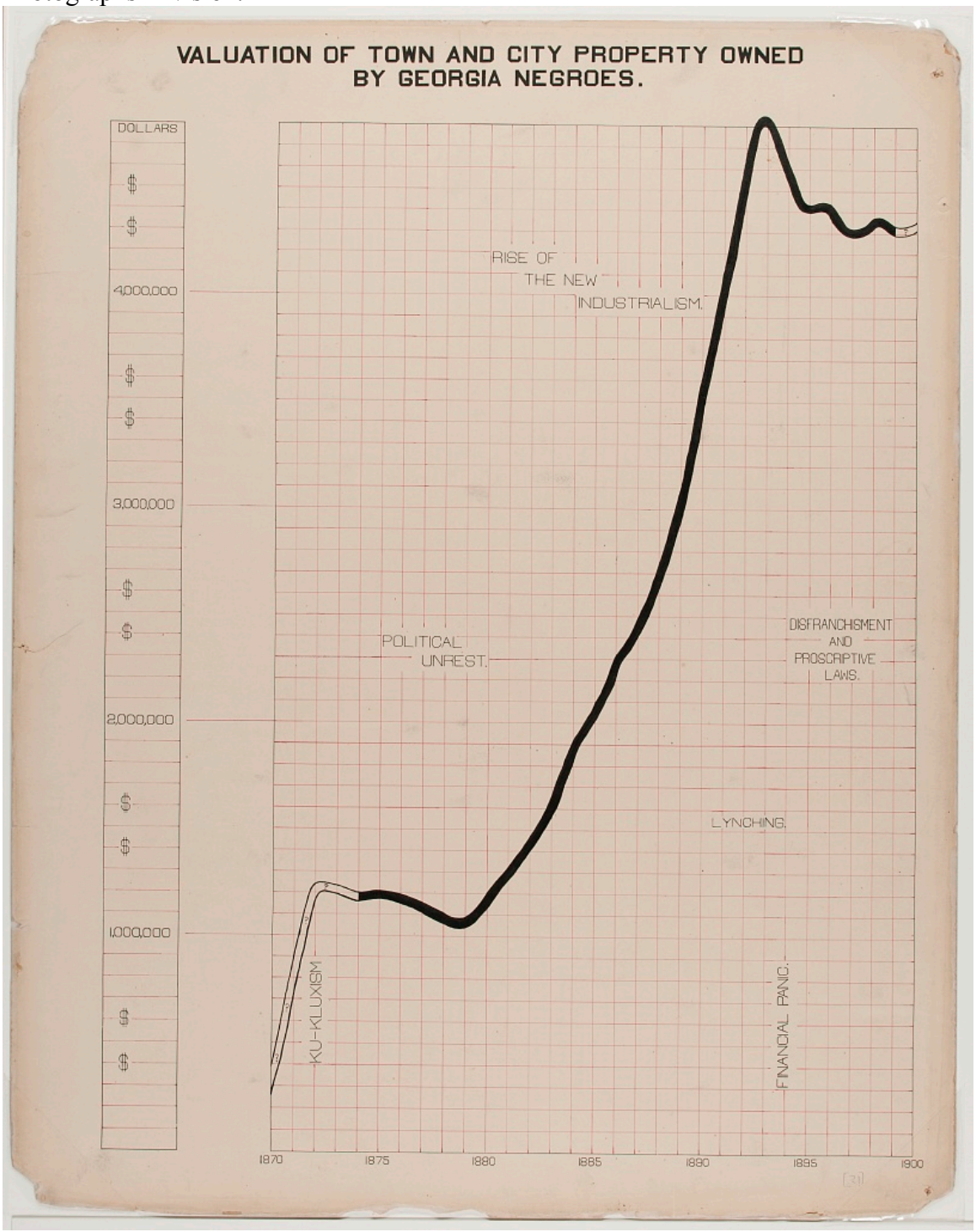


Figure 5.1. Frank Bellew, "Visit of the Ku-Klux," *Harper's Weekly* 16, no. 791 (February 24, 1872), 160, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

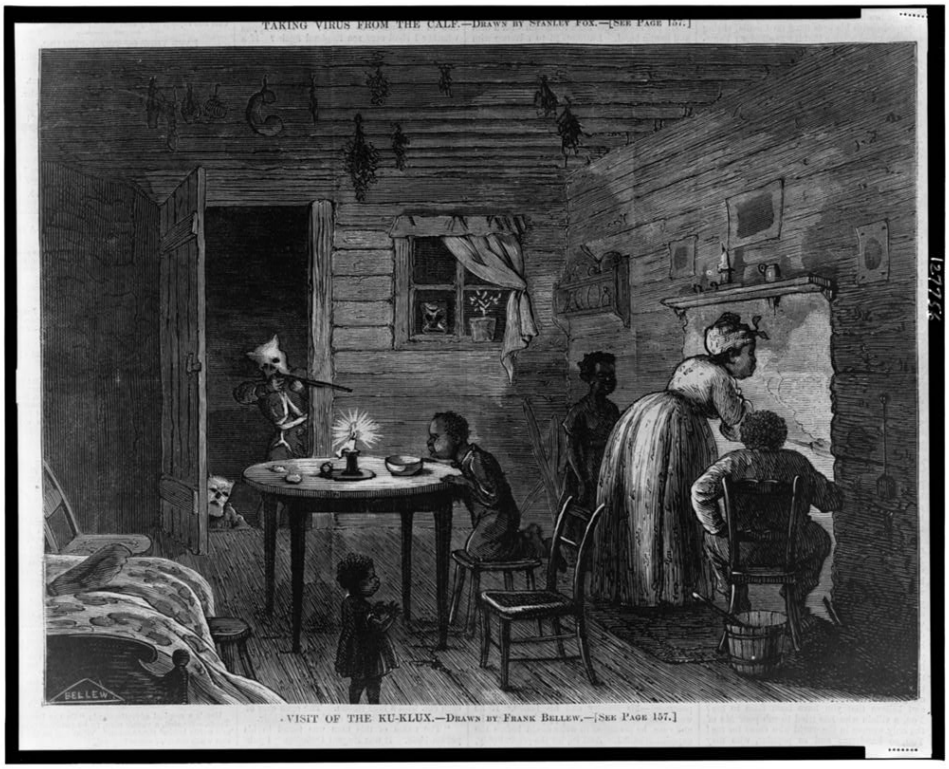


Figure 6.1. Postcard, ca. late 19th/early 20th century, Virginia Historical Society.

Figure 6.2. For instance, the Library of Congress summary for this photograph taken sometime between 1867 and 1890 is as follows: "Photo shows a log cabin with two African American men seated outside and an African American woman standing in the doorway of a slave or sharecropper dwelling." Launey & Goebel, "Early Negro Life," Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Summary accessed at http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2015650291/.

Figure 6.3. James Phillips, “Plan and Sections of a Slave Ship [the 'Brooks' sometimes ‘Brookes’]” (London: 1789), Michael Graham-Stewart Collection, Royal Museums Greenwich.

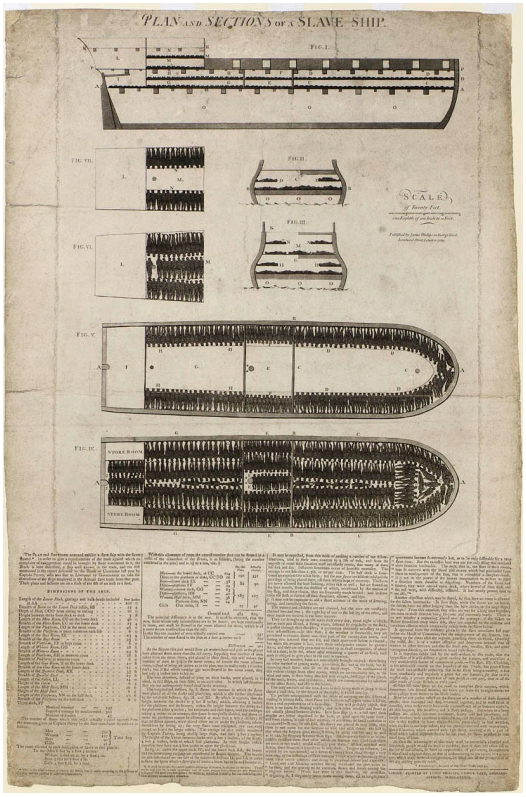


Figure 6.4. Josiah Wedgewood & Sons, medallion, ca. 1787, Staffordshire, England, Collections of the National Museum of American History.

Figure 6.5. Richard Hildreth, *Archy Moore, The White Slave; or, Memoirs of a Fugitive* (New York, 1857), p. 95, found at http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/details.php?categorynum=16&categoryName=&theRecord=42&recordCount=75.

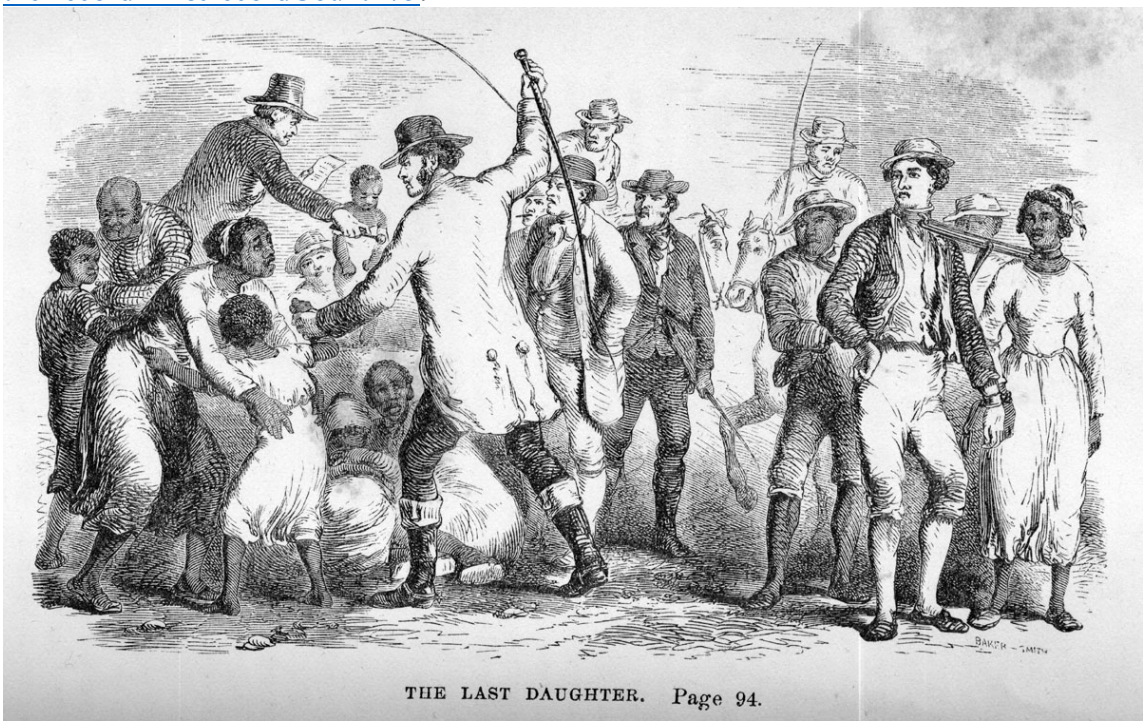
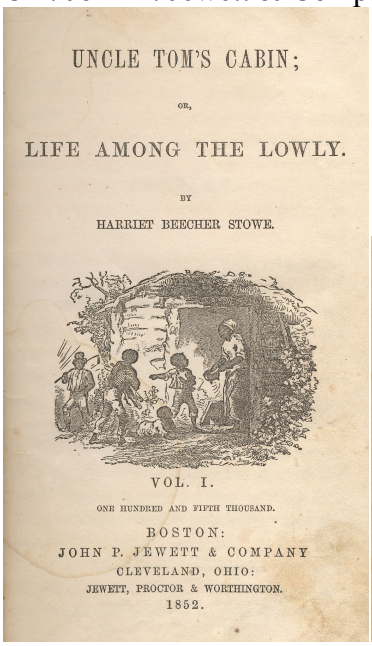


Figure 6.6. Richard Ansdell, *Hunted Slaves*, ca. 1860, Merseyside Maritime Museum.

Figure 6.7. Notice the central image (zoom on the right): a black family and small log cabin. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (Cleveland, OH: John P. Jewett & Company, 1852).


UNCLE TOM'S CABIN;

OR,

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

VOL. I.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH THOUSAND.

BOSTON:
JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY
CLEVELAND, OHIO:
JEWETT, PROCTOR & WORTHINGTON.
1852.

Figure 6.8. This 1840 Whig campaign print is one of thousands of lithographs, posters, and objects that associated the log cabin with William Henry Harrison and, more generally, with the common man. "[This log cabin was the first building erected on the North Bend . . .]" (Philadelphia: Lith. & published by Thomas Sinclair, 1840), Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

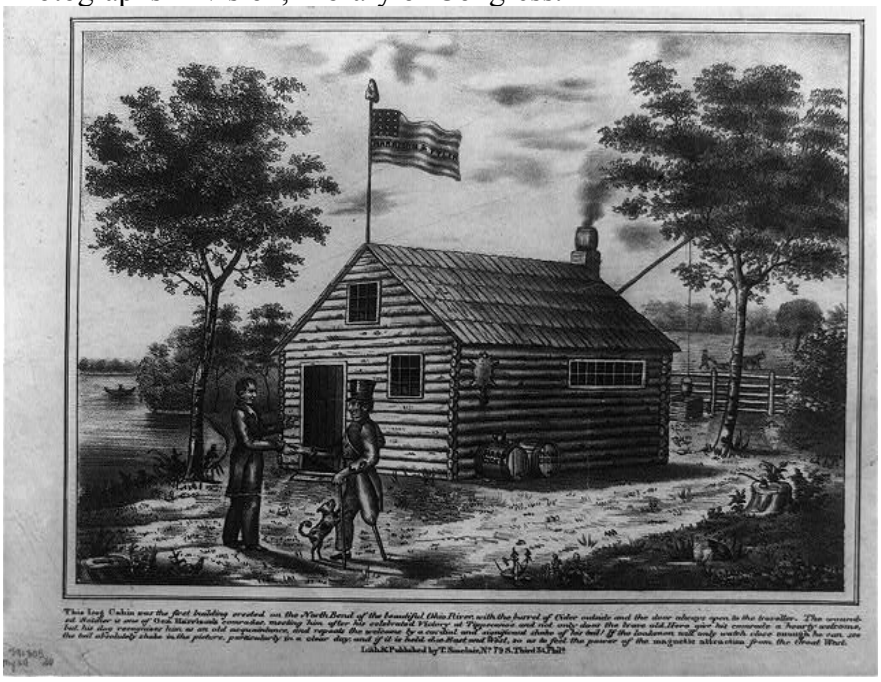


Figure 6.9. Abraham Lincoln's campaign for president revived the log cabin imagery of Harrison, further imbuing this humble architectural form with political potency. The nameplate of *The Rail Splitter* includes the log cabin (Chicago, Ill.).

Figure 6.10. This *Uncle Tom's Cabin* scene with the slave cabin in rear view was featured on many objects in the nineteenth century, including this British transferware plate. "Uncle Tom's Cabin—Lizzy's Bridge," Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, found at http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/tomituds/plates/platesf.html.

Figure 6.11. J. A. Palmer, “Characteristic Southern Scenes—Uncle Tony & His Bride,” ca. 1870s-1890s, American Antiquarian Society (AAS).

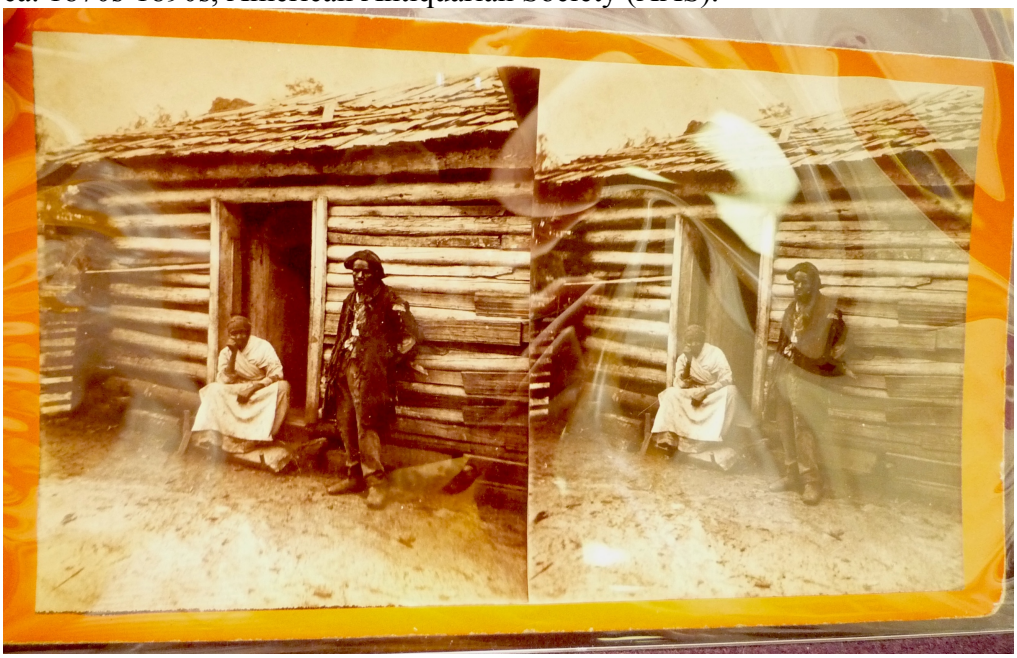


Figure 6.12. Stronmeyer & Wyman, “No Mas’r; Not ‘cause I Married young, but I is a Fas’ Breeder,” 1895, AAS. (full view and zoom on caption)

Figure 6.13. Verso of Stronmeyer & Wyman, "No Mas'r; Not 'cause I Married young, but I is a Fas' Breeder," 1895, AAS.

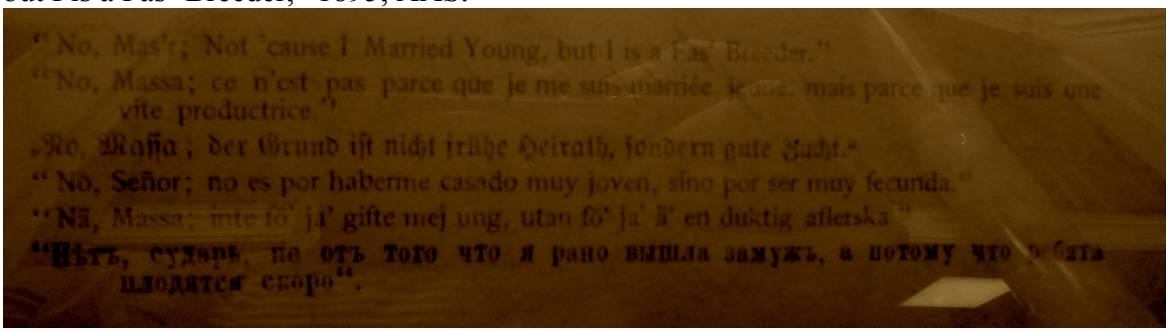


Figure 6.14. Advertisement for Higgins' German Laundry Soap, c. late 19th century, Rubenstein Library, Duke University.

Figure 6.15. Trade Card for Czar Baking Powder, Steele & Emery, c. 1870-1900, The Henry Ford.

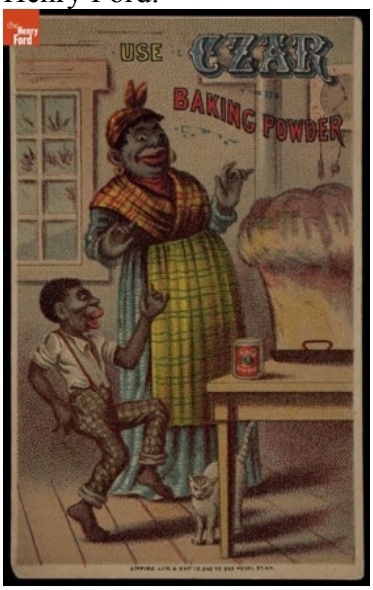
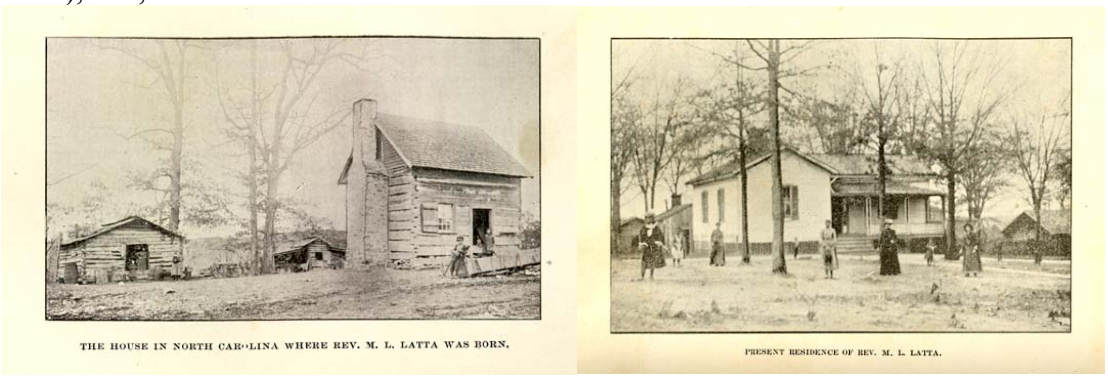


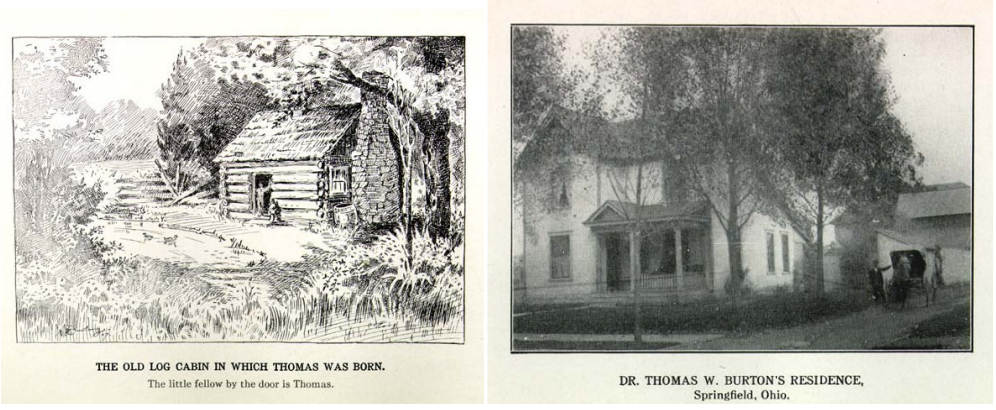
Figure 6.16. Postcard advertisement for Korn Kinks cereal, early 20th century, found at http://www.mrbreakfast.com/cereal_detail.asp?id=1189.

Figure 6.17a&b. Morgan London Latta, *The History of My Life and Work* (Raleigh, 1903), 40a, 312a.


THE HOUSE IN NORTH CAROLINA WHERE REV. M. L. LATTA WAS BORN.

PRESENT RESIDENCE OF REV. M. L. LATTA.

Figure 6.18a&b. Thomas Burton, *What Experience Has Taught Me; An Autobiography of Thomas William Burton* (Cincinnati, OH: Press of Jennings and Graham, 1910).


THE OLD LOG CABIN IN WHICH THOMAS WAS BORN.
The little fellow by the door is Thomas.

DR. THOMAS W. BURTON'S RESIDENCE,
Springfield, Ohio.

Figure 6.19a&b. Scott Bond, *From Slavery to Wealth. The Life of Scott Bond. The Rewards of Honesty, Industry, Economy and Perseverance* (Madison, Ark.: The Journal Printing Company, 1917).

Figure 6.20a&b. Peter Bruner, *A Slave's Adventures Toward Freedom: Not Fiction, but the True Story of a Struggle* (Oxford, OH: 1918).

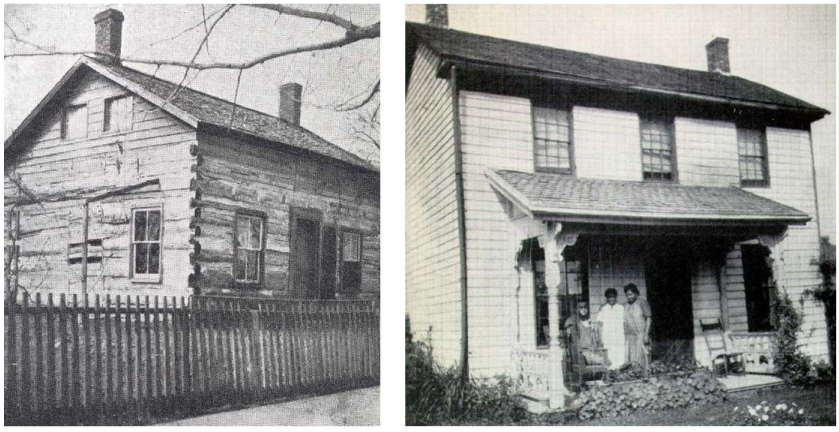


Figure 6.21. Photograph by Hampton Institute Camera Club, in Paul Laurence Dunbar, "The Deserted Plantation," in *Poems of Cabin and Field* (Dodd, Mead & Company, 1896), 18.

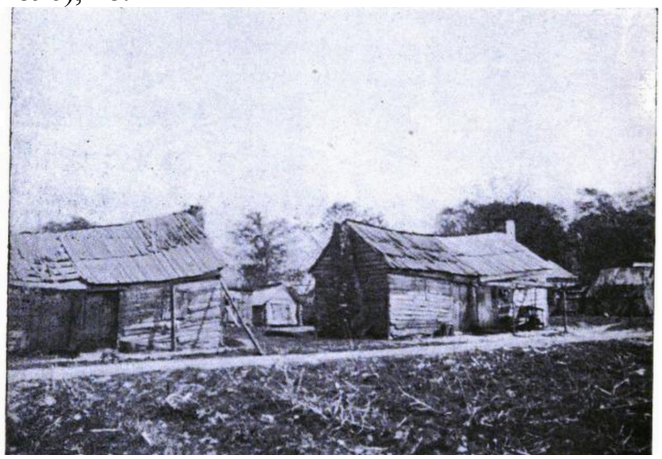


Figure 6.22. "Evolution of Farmer's Houses," *Photographs of Tuskegee Institute: An Illustrated Inventory of the American Antiquarian Society*, accessed January 25, 2017, http://www.americanantiquarian.org/tuskegeecollection/items/show/87.

Figure 6.23. Booker T. Washington, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Life and Work* (Toronto: J .L. Nichols & Company, 1901), btw pp. 22 and 23.

Figure 6.24. The Oaks, c. 1999, National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/lgimage/btw25.htm.

Figure 6.25. "Interior of Negro Building, Atlanta Exposition," c. 1896, stereograph, Library of Congress.

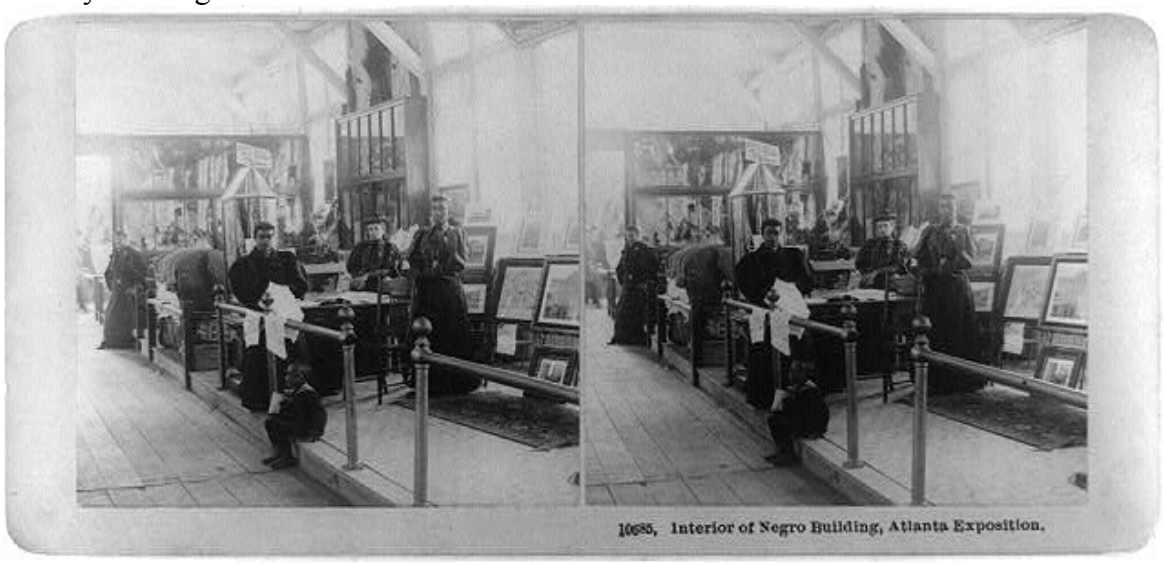


Figure 6.26. “Exhibit of the American negroes at the Paris exposition,” 1900, photomechanical print, Library of Congress.

EXHIBIT OF AMERICAN NEGROES AT THE PARIS EXPOSITION.

Figure 6.27a,b,c,d,e,& f. A series of statistical charts prepared by W. E. B. Du Bois and Atlanta University students, ca. 1900, ink on paper, Library of Congress.

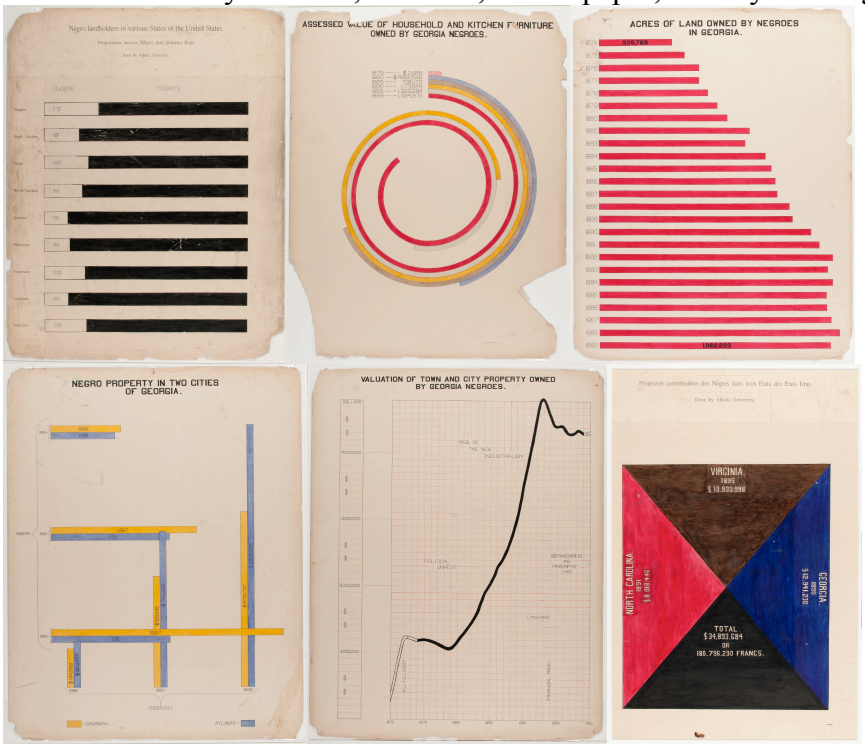


Figure 6.28. "[House or farm building with deteriorating roof]," 1899 or 1900, photographic print, Library of Congress.

Figure 6.29. “[Negro city tenements, Atlanta, Georgia],” 1899 or 1900, photographic print, Library of Congress.

Figure 6.30. The home of Reverend R. R. Church—father of Mary Church Terrell—was a center of activism in Memphis. “Negro homes - home of R.R. Church, Memphis, Tenn. (exterior),” 1899[?], photographic print, Library of Congress.

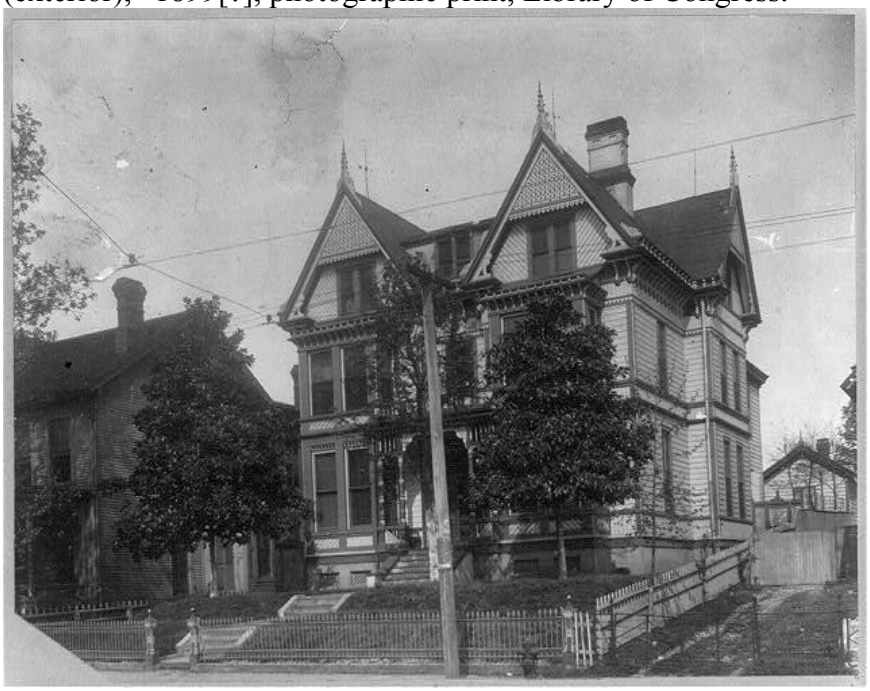


Figure 6.31. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Housing the Negro; III. The Home of the Country Freedman," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 10 (October 1901), 536.

Figure 6.32. The ideal black home, seen through a photograph published in the *Southern Workman* in 1901. "Hampton Graduates at Home," in Leroy C. Cooley, Jr., "The All-Around Training of a Hampton Cadet," *Southern Workman* 30, no. 9 (September 1901), 500.

HAMPTON GRADUATES AT HOME

Figure E.1.“Hemmings Cabin,” Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello.